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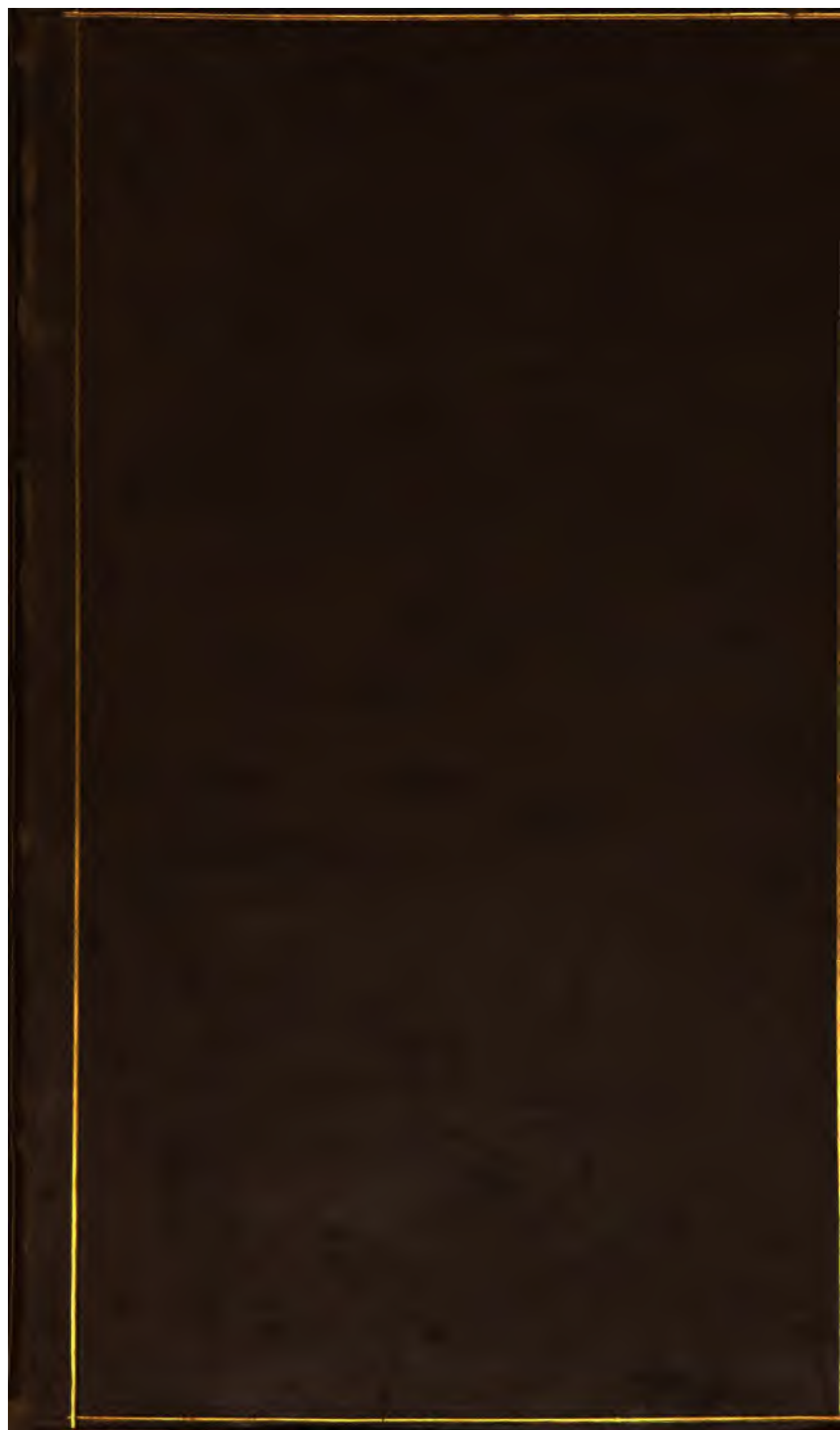
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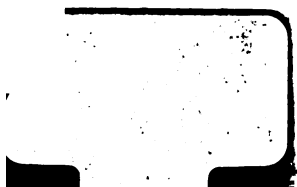




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**A**

**PRACTICAL EXPOSITION.**



A  
PRACTICAL EXPOSITION  
OF  
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO  
ST. JOHN.

BY  
THE REV. ROBERT ANDERSON,  
PERPETUAL CURATE OF TRINITY CHAPEL, BRIGHTON; AND  
CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD HILL, AND THE RIGHT  
HONOURABLE LORD TEIGNMOUTH.

VOL. I.

32.

LONDON:  
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY;  
AND JAMES BURNS, 17, PORTMAN STREET.

1841.

26.





LONDON :

PRINTED BY G. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

## P R E F A C E.

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IN my preface to the Practical Exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, I have thus briefly described the manner in which, in humble dependence upon Divine aid, I have always endeavoured to provide for the instruction of the people committed to my charge. 'In all my preparations for the pulpit, I have sought, in the first place, in meditation and in prayer, to enter into the depth and spirit, the scope and connexion, of any given passage. I have then consulted, as far as it has been in my power, such works as bear upon the interpretation of Holy Writ; and, whenever I have met with observations well suited to illustrate the passage in hand, I have thankfully availed myself of such assistance, under the full conviction that it was my bounden duty to strengthen my own weak efforts by the wisdom and the piety of those, whether of earlier or of later days, who have laboured in the



same sacred cause.' The above statement, which was written in 1833, applies, in its fullest extent, to the following Practical Exposition of the Gospel according to St. John, in which I have endeavoured to derive assistance from all those writers, within my reach, of whatever age, or country, or denomination, who have appeared to me to give just interpretations of the sacred text.

I may mention, in particular, that I have derived material assistance from Lampe's admirable Commentary, in tracing the general scope of the evangelist, in illustrating the various arguments of our Lord's discourses, and in determining the portions to be considered in the several sections. And I have felt it to be no small privilege, that, while consulting the pages of this copious and learned commentator, I have enjoyed access to some of those treasures of wisdom and piety, which we have received, as a valuable inheritance, from the early Christian Church. For Lampe has enriched his Commentary with ample references to the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, and he has introduced, more especially, very large extracts from St. Augustine's Homilies on this Gospel.

It will also be seen, that I am largely indebted to Bishop Hall's 'Contemplations upon the Principal Passages in the Holy Story,' for many

beautiful and edifying thoughts on what may be termed the historical portions of this Gospel; and all who are acquainted with this monument of true devotion, will read, with deep interest, the following testimony, which the good Bishop bears, in a letter\* to a friend, respecting the writings of Christian antiquity. ‘To a man so furnished with all sorts of knowledge, that, according to his dispositions, he can change his studies, I should wonder, that even the sun should seem to pace slowly. For if many busy tongues can chase away good hours in pleasant chat, and complain of the haste of night; what ingenuous mind can ever be weary of talking with learned authors, the most harmless and the sweetest of companions! What a heaven lives a scholar in, that, at once, in one close room, can daily converse with all the glorious Martyrs and Fathers; that can single out, at pleasure, either sententious Tertullian, or grave Cyprian, or resolute Jerome, or flowing Chrysostom, or divine Ambrose, or devout Bernard, or, who alone is all these, heavenly Augustine; and can talk with them, and hear their wise and holy counsels, verdicts, resolutions; yea, to rise higher, with courtly Isaiah, with learned Paul, and with all their fellow prophets and apostles: yet

\* See Epistle to Mr. Matthew Milward, on the Pleasure of Study and Contemplation.



more, like another Moses, with God himself, in them both! Let the world condemn us: while we have these delights, we cannot envy them: we cannot wish ourselves other than we are.'

It can be scarcely necessary for me to observe that the same profound acquaintance with all the Fathers of the early Christian Church, is apparent in every page of Bishop Pearson's Exposition of the Creed, which is frequently referred to in the progress, and, more especially, toward the conclusion, of the following work. And it may, indeed, be safely affirmed, with regard to all the great English divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that they have taken, for their models, the Fathers of all the ancient churches, east and west, and that they have formed their teaching upon all.

Even such, in truth, is the reverence which the Church of England everywhere inculcates for pious antiquity; and it is a reverence, which is sanctioned by reason, and inspired by feeling, as well as recommended by authority. For although we readily admit that there does not appear to have been, among the Fathers, any catholic exposition of scriptures, any traditionary comment upon its continuous text, yet surely every thoughtful mind will feel that, in preferring the Fathers, *not*, as some ignorantly suppose, to the Holy Scriptures, but only to our-

selves, we are 'preferring\* the waters near the fountain to the troubled æstuary, rolled backward and forward by the varying tide of public opinion, and rendered brackish by the continued contact with the bitter waters of this world.'

Every thoughtful Christian will also feel how indispensable it is that, in important questions of doctrine or discipline, we should thankfully embrace every opportunity of consulting the Fathers of the primitive church; as well as our own standard English divines. For, as belonging to the Holy Catholic Church, we profess not to strike out new theories for ourselves, but to build up and fortify what has been committed to our charge. 'We do not resort to the Fathers,' says Dr. Waterland, 'to superadd *new* doctrines to the Scripture, but only to secure the *old*. It is much to be suspected that many pretend a zeal for scripture, who mean nothing by it, but to have its fences taken down, that they may deal the more freely or rudely with it. They would exclude the ancients, to make room for themselves, and would throw a kind of slight upon received interpretation, only to advance their own.'

It has been my endeavour, in the following work, as it was in the Practical Exposition of St.

\* See Preface to Augustine's Confessions: LIBRARY OF THE FATHERS.



Paul's Epistle to the Romans, to adapt the several portions of it to the purposes of family worship and domestic instruction. And I would now ask the reader to unite with me in commending it to God's most gracious benediction, trusting that we may do so, without impropriety, in the words of the collect for the Festival of St. John the Evangelist, saying together ;

‘ Merciful Lord, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrines of thy blessed apostle and evangelist, St. John, may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.’

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FROM A SERMON, BY BISHOP ANDREWS, ON  
JOHN i. 14.

‘There is, in the Old Testament, in *Ezekiel* x., and, in the New, in *Revelation* iv., a vision of four sundry shapes: a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. It hath been usually received, to apply these four to the four Evangelists, and, of them, the eagle to St. John. The nature of the eagle is, by God himself, described, in *Job* xxxix., by two properties: she “mounteth up;” no fowl under heaven towers so high; and “where the slain are, there is she;” none so soon or so suddenly down upon the body as the eagle. Both these do lively express themselves in St. John; and nowhere more lively, than in this gospel. As an eagle in the clouds, he first mounteth wonderfully high, even beyond Moses and his “beginning;” beyond *Genesis*, and the world’s creation. For whereas Moses says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;” St. John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This may well be termed the eagle’s flight; so exceeding high, that the clearest eye hath much ado to follow him. Yet, so far as they can follow him, the very philosophers have been driven to admire the penning of this gospel. But, after this, as an eagle, again, down he cometh directly, from the height of heaven, and lights upon the body of the Word “made flesh,” the mystery of his incarnation; telling us that He, who, “in the beginning,” was “with God,” and “was God,” was, in the fulness of time, found among men, and was made man. St. John, therefore, does not dwell long aloft; but since “the Word, as “God,” is far above our reach, he hastens to tell us of that, which so nearly concerns us all, viz. that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.”’



A

**PRACTICAL EXPOSITION**

OF THE

**GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.**

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**SECTION I.**

**CHAPTER i. 1—5.**

**INTRODUCTION.**

**CHRIST'S ETERNAL AND MEDIATORIAL GLORY.**

It is stated, at the close of the twentieth chapter, that St. John's design, in writing this gospel, was to show that "Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God." And this design is kept in view through the whole gospel. The other evangelists record our Lord's parables and miracles; but St. John records chiefly His discourses about Himself. And if any one desires to learn the true doctrine respecting "the Messiah, the Son



of God," expressed in simple language, but with most sublime conceptions; or to learn the way of approach to the mercy-seat of God, he will find that nowhere are these important truths inculcated more powerfully and more emphatically than in the Gospel according to St. John.

Indeed, it was in allusion to the great and sublime doctrines which this gospel inculcates, respecting the Divine nature and the mediatorial office of Jesus Christ, that it was called by the ancient Christians 'the Spiritual Gospel.' And by every mind, which is disposed to receive with humble thankfulness the great mystery of godliness, or qualified to admire and reverence the unspeakable love and condescension of the Redeemer, this gospel must always be regarded as in the highest degree instructive and affecting. It was written by the disciple whom Jesus loved; whose head had rested on his bosom; whom he vouchsafed to take with him as a witness of his transfiguration; and to whose care, upon his departure from the world, he commended his aged mother. And who would write with more warmth or affection, or with a greater zeal for the honour of his Lord, than the beloved disciple? or, who would give a more faithful transcript of the discourses of Him, who spake as "never man spake?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ch. vii. 46. See *Bp. Blomfield's Lectures on St. John.*

It has been beautifully observed, moreover, that St. John entered into the family of Christ while his youth was unspotted from the world; and that, being led on to still higher degrees of purity and holiness, under the blessed influence of his Lord, who loved him and honoured him with his intimacy, he was of a mind aptly qualified to apprehend the higher mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. For if the “pure in heart” have a promise, as of a congenial reward, that they shall hereafter “see God,”<sup>2</sup> may we not believe that, in such measure as their hearts are pure, they will have a capacity for some anticipation of this blessed vision here on earth? St. John, therefore, as a person of this character, was more especially qualified to conceive and to teach those mysterious truths, which are the object of our faith.”<sup>3</sup>

The evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke, begin their respective gospels, by relating the circumstances attending the birth of Jesus; and they trace his genealogy from David, whose descendant, according to the flesh, the promised Messiah was to be. But St. John introduces Him, at once, in His divine character, as having existed before the world began, Himself the great Creator of the world. And having thus, in the

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See *Townson's Harmony of the Gospels.*

very opening of the gospel, announced the transcendent dignity of his subject, he inculcates the same sublime truth throughout the whole of his subsequent history. With this notion of the scope and purpose of the evangelist, his gospel is clear, consistent, and intelligible. Upon any other supposition, it is obscure and inexplicable.

The first five verses may be regarded as containing an epitome of the whole gospel; for they comprise, in substance, all those truths which the evangelist illustrates and explains in the remaining part of the history.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of man. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*<sup>4</sup>

St. John speaks, in these verses, of Christ's glory, both as God and as our Redeemer; and it is abundantly manifest, from the language which is here employed, that the divine and mediatorial glory of Christ is, in fact, one and indivisible. The first two verses declare Christ's glory from eternity. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word*

<sup>4</sup> v. 1—5.

*was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And, in the three remaining verses, St. John describes his glory in time, as exhibited, first, in the work of creation: All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made; and, afterwards, in the work of redemption: In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

Let us now proceed to consider, more particularly, the instruction to be derived from these opening verses of the gospel.

*In the beginning was the Word, says St. John, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.* When the evangelist spoke of **THE WORD**, the Jews could be at no loss to perceive his meaning, for they were constantly taught, in their synagogues, that the Word of God signified a divine person. And surely, brethren, without intruding into the secret things of Jehovah, we may venture to remark, that, even to our gross apprehension, this mysterious name has an obvious and striking propriety, in its application to the Eternal Son of God. The Redeemer of the world, in his divine character, may well be entitled **THE WORD**; since the offices which belong to him, in the mysterious economy of the God-head, are those of commanding the execution of

the Father's will, and of making known his designs to created beings. Yes, he came to do the will of the Father; and by him the promises of the everlasting covenant are announced and revealed to the universe. The wonderful design of man's redemption is always represented to us as the hidden counsel of the Father before the foundation of the world. And, by the second person of the Godhead, it was made fully known upon earth in these latter days; when "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath spoken to us by his Son."<sup>5</sup>

St. John says, that *all things were made by him*. And then, to guard us against the error of supposing that Christ was the mere instrument of creation in the hands of his Almighty Father, and that he himself had been previously created, the evangelist emphatically adds, that *without him was not anything made that was made*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Heb. i. 1, 2. And see *Le Bas' Sermon on John i. 14*.

<sup>6</sup> ' So numerous and clear are the arguments and the testimonies of Scripture, in favour of the true deity of Christ, that I can hardly imagine how, upon the admission of the divine authority of Scripture, and with a regard to fair rules of interpretation, this doctrine can by any means be called into doubt. Especially the passage contained in the first three verses of the first chapter of John is so clear, and so superior to all exception, that by no daring efforts of either

Having thus plainly declared that Christ himself is uncreate, and therefore self-existent, St. John adds, that *in him was life*, and that *the life was the light of men*.

These words may be described as the New Testament version of the psalmist's declaration: "With thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light."<sup>7</sup> And how important are the truths to which our attention is here directed! For let us consider, in the first place, the full purport of the declaration, that *in him was life*. In Jesus Christ *was life*, when he freely offered himself as a "Lamb for the slaughter," even "before the foundation of the world."<sup>8</sup> And in him *was life*, when, after having come into the world, as a Prophet, he proposed "the words of eternal life;"<sup>9</sup> as a Priest, he opened a "new and living way, which he hath (for ever) consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;"<sup>1</sup> and as a King, he poured down his Spirit from on high, to "quicken" all true believers, and to "raise them up together, and make them sit together in heavenly places in Christ

commentators or critics can it ever be overturned, or be snatched out of the hands of the defenders of the truth.'—*Griesbach's Preface.*

<sup>7</sup> Ps. xxxvi. 9.

<sup>8</sup> See Rev. xiii. 8, and Isa. liii. 7.

<sup>9</sup> John vi. 68.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 20.

Jesus." <sup>2</sup> Yes, *in him was life*, in this highest sense, even as the Author of everlasting life to all who believe in him. And well, therefore, might the evangelist add, as he does, in the next place, that *the life was the light of men*. For Jesus Christ is *the light of men*, not merely as the great Instructor of mankind in the precepts of his gospel, but as diffusing through the soul of every returning sinner the light and warmth of his grace, and as holding out the glories of his kingdom to all true believers. He is a *light* to us in his word, his sacraments, and his ordinances. He is a *light*, which none of the changes of life's uncertain day can extinguish or overcast; and which to the faithful and experienced Christian shines brighter and brighter, as the shades of evening begin to gather round his declining years.

Effulgent, therefore, in all the Father's perfections, "being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," <sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ is set in the spiritual firmament, as that "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." <sup>4</sup> For he is the only source of all true light, by which any man in the world ever was, ever is, or ever shall be enlightened. And may we not truly say that he is a Light, before the brightness of whose shining all other lights have had their lustre quenched? Yes, brethren, what-

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. ii. 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. i. 3.

<sup>4</sup> v. 9.

ever there is of pure religion and elevated morals in the world ; whatever consoling hope we enjoy from the forgiveness of sins ; whatever prospect there is of a restoration to man of that divine image which sin has defaced ; whatever beams of comfort light up the brow of the dying Christian ; all, all are the blessed effects of that " light," which the Sun of Righteousness hath diffused in a benighted world ! It is only by the power of his beams that the face of our desolate nature can be in any degree renewed. And it is only when they shall have had their full course and operation, that the " wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them." <sup>5</sup> As yet, all nations feel not his blessed influence. But travelling on, like the sun in the heavens, in the greatness of his strength, he is unaffected by the mists which rise from the earth to obscure his lustre. And, " rejoicing like a giant to run his course," <sup>6</sup> he will not rest till all nations have seen his glory. Prophecy, whose exact fulfilment hitherto is a sure pledge of the future accomplishment of its predictions, assures us that " in returning and rest" the Jew shall be " saved ;" that the " fulness of the Gentiles shall come in ;" and that, under the healing

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xi. 6.<sup>6</sup> Ps. xix. 5.



influences of this "light of the world," the "wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."<sup>7</sup>

But hitherto, alas! these glorious prophecies are but faintly realized! For, as it is said in the fifth verse, *the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not*. In other words, he, who is *the light of men*, came to teach a benighted, ignorant, and gainsaying world. You will observe that the verb of the second clause is in the past sense: *the darkness comprehended it not*. And from hence it has been suggested, by some commentators, that the evangelist may be referring more especially to the ages preceding Christ, as not having apprehended and made use of the light. But still, brethren, we must all feel that the light continues to shine in the midst of an ignorant, perverse, and sinful world. And how earnestly, therefore, should we offer up, day by day, the brief but comprehensive petition, "Thy kingdom come;" praying, in the first place, for the diffusion of this divine light among the nations which still "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death;"<sup>8</sup> and, secondly, for the admission of the same light into our own hearts.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. xxx. 15; Rom. xi. 25; and Isa. xxxv. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Luke i. 79.

1. The words of this petition point, on the one hand, to the diffusion of divine light among the heathen nations. The evangelical prophet, when looking forward to the day of the Messiah, declares that "unto him every knee shall bow."<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, when St. Paul speaks of this light of the world, he says that the "grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men;" or, according to the construction adopted in the margin, that "the grace of God hath appeared, which bringeth salvation to all men."<sup>1</sup> And we feel assured that, in the language of that divine hymn which we repeat every Christmas Day, the Sun of the Spiritual Firmament shall indeed "go forth from the end of the heaven," and that "his circuit shall be unto the ends of it," and that "nothing shall be hid from the heat thereof."<sup>2</sup> While we rejoice, therefore, at the progress which the Gospel has already made, we earnestly pray for the coming of that day, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."<sup>3</sup> In the mean time, when we look around upon the nations which are still walking in their own ways, and ignorantly worshipping the gods of their own imaginations, we seem to discern, amidst all this darkness, the finger of our God,

<sup>9</sup> Isa. xlv. 23.<sup>1</sup> Tit. ii. 11.<sup>2</sup> Ps. xix. 6.<sup>3</sup> Hab. ii. 14.

indicating to us, by unanswerable facts, how little man's boasted reason is able to effect. And we are thus led to acknowledge the truth of that solemn declaration: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."<sup>4</sup>

2. But I am to remind you, in the next place, that the words of this petition, "Thy kingdom come," point also to the admission of the beams of this divine light into our own hearts. And, assuredly, if, from the state of the heathen world, we learn what is the utmost which man's boasted reason is able to accomplish, we learn, at the same time, from the state of the christian world, that even revelation itself will not profit fallen creatures, without the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Oh! pray, then, my christian brethren, that, through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, your understandings may be enlightened to receive, and your affections sanctified to embrace and ever hold fast, the things which concern your everlasting peace! And pray, more especially, that, under his guidance, you may be looking continually to the cross of Christ. Yes, beloved, let that mysterious sacrifice declare the greatness of the price which has been paid for your redemption. And let the greatness of the price remind you of the real extent and malignity of sin.

<sup>4</sup> Zech. iv. 6.

For here it is, and here only, that you can ever discover the depths, into which sin has plunged a rebellious and unbelieving world! Contemplate the Lamb of God, bleeding and dying upon the cross, as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, and you will then be led to consider the supernatural darkness, which accompanied the crucifixion, as but a faint emblem of that darkness, in which sin has enveloped all the faculties and all the affections of our corrupted nature. It was to scatter this darkness away from the souls of men, that Jesus Christ came as a light into the world. And as you, therefore, would not incur the condemnation of those who "love darkness better than light,"<sup>5</sup> see that, on all occasions and under all circumstances, you are looking to this "Sun of Righteousness," who hath "arisen" upon this benighted world "with healing in his wings!"<sup>6</sup>

I know, indeed, how perpetually the cares and the occupations of this sinful world are gathering round us, to intercept our view of the blessed and eternal realities of the Gospel. But I know, also, that, with all of us, there are seasons, when the concerns of an eternal world appear before us in their true light, and exercise an influence over every power and every affection of the soul. Let us pray, therefore, that such seasons may not

<sup>5</sup> Ch. iii. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Mal. iv. 2.

pass away unimproved ! Shall the husbandman watch every change in the heavens, with a view to the cultivation of his ground and the growth of his crop ; and shall not the Christian endeavour to avail himself of every season, for the advancement of his spiritual husbandry ? If, on the bed of sickness, the world shall appear to fade from our view, and death and eternity shall seem to fill the whole field of vision ; let us pray that the Spirit of Christ may perpetuate these sacred impressions on our souls ! And if, in the stillness of our chambers, we shall sometimes experience, in all their power, the sweetness of the divine promises, let us pray that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may launch forth into the depths of these promises, and possess ourselves, as much as possible, of the fulness of God ! Yea, let us pray that, in all the various seasons, and under all the manifold changes of life, the Holy Spirit may open our eyes, more and more, to behold the beams of the “ Sun of Righteousness,” and that he may seal to our hearts those delightful words of the Saviour, recorded in another part of this gospel : “ I am the light of the world : he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”<sup>7</sup> My brethren, “ yet a little while is the light with us.” Let us “ walk,” therefore,

<sup>7</sup> John viii. 12.

“ while we have the light ;” that we may be indeed “ the children of light ;” and so may, at length, “ attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” <sup>s</sup>

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## SECTION II.

### CHAP. I. 6—13.

#### INTRODUCTION.

##### CHRIST'S GLORY MANIFESTED TO THE WORLD.

The introductory part of this gospel extends to the end of the eighteenth verse ; and, in the portion which yet remains to be considered, the evangelist shows, not only that the highest glory belongs to the Word, as God and as Mediator, as Creator and as Redeemer ; but also that his glory has been clearly and abundantly manifested to the world. Reserving for the subject of the next section the description of the effects which this manifestation produced in those who believed, I will now call your attention to the sixth and the seven following verses, in which it is declared

<sup>s</sup> John xii. 35, 36 ; and see *Collect for St. John the Evangelist's Day.*

how the glory of Jesus Christ was manifested to the world; viz. first, by the ministry of John the Baptist; and, secondly, by his own advent: the one being as the first dawning of the day; the other being the rising of the "Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings."<sup>9</sup>

It is in the first three verses, that the ministry of John the Baptist is thus described:

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.*<sup>1</sup>

It is here said of the *man*, who was thus to prepare the way of the Lord, that *his name was John*. And, as we learn from the Gospel by St. Luke,<sup>2</sup> that the name was expressly given him by the Lord, our minds naturally turn to the import of the name so given. It denotes, in Hebrew, 'The Lord has been propitious,' or 'compassionate.' And when did the Baptist appear, as the messenger of the Lord of hosts? At the very time when God had determined to show himself, in his Son, as propitious to a guilty world; at the very time when he was about to reveal the fulness of his grace to his rebellious creatures! It was this grace, which John the Baptist now began to declare. And his office,

<sup>9</sup> Mal. iv. 2.

<sup>1</sup> v. 6—8.

<sup>2</sup> See Luke i. 13.

therefore, might well be described as “*the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*”<sup>3</sup> All this must have been fully understood by Zacharias, when he said, “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.”<sup>4</sup> And, viewed in this light, there is a peculiar emphasis in those words of the angel to Zacharias, which were immediately subjoined to the command respecting the imposition of the name of *John*: “And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice in his birth.” “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

Our evangelist truly and emphatically declares, of this *man sent from God*, that *he came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He bore witness of the Light*, first of all, while he was yet in the

<sup>3</sup> Mark i. 1.<sup>4</sup> Luke i. 76—78.<sup>5</sup> Luke i. 14, 16, 17.



womb. But he *bore witness* most effectually, when he entered upon his ministry. He *bore witness of the Light*, in his doctrines.<sup>6</sup> He *bore witness of the Light*, by his baptism, which was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,"<sup>7</sup> and which prefigured the more efficacious baptism about to be instituted by Him, who "baptizeth us with the Holy Ghost and with fire."<sup>8</sup> He *bore witness of the Light*, by the symbolical character of his life, in which, after the manner of the ancient prophets, he shadowed forth the character of Christ's kingdom. He *bore witness of the Light*, by the peculiar sanctity of his life. And he *bore witness of the Light*, by his constancy unto death for the truth's sake; from which it did indeed appear that he was not a "reed shaken with the wind,"<sup>9</sup> but one who was prepared and enabled to seal his testimony with his blood. And we are here told that the end for which this testimony was borne, was that *all men through him might believe; even through Him*, who is the Eternal Word, and who is *the life and the light of men*.

To inculcate, in the most forcible manner, this important truth, St. John describes, still more emphatically, the office of the Baptist, saying, *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of*

<sup>6</sup> See ver. 15, 19—36; chap. iii. 27—36.

<sup>7</sup> Mark i. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. iii. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. xi. 7.

*that Light.* And then passing from the ministry of the Baptist, who was only the harbinger of the promised Messiah, to the actual advent of the Messiah himself, the evangelist thus proceeds :

*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not ; he came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*<sup>1</sup>

In thus describing the Messiah, as that *true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, the evangelist finely contrasts His office with that of the Baptist. John preached only to the Jews. Jesus came to be a “light to lighten the Gentiles,” as well as to be “the glory of his people Israel.”<sup>2</sup> Not, indeed, that *every man*, or every individual of the human family, is actually *enlightened* with the knowledge of the Gospel. But, in the word of God, and in his ordinances, *the Light* is freely offered to all, without distinction, whether Jews or Gentiles. And it is certain, moreover, that the bright beams of this *true Light* must penetrate the heart of every one, who desires ‘so to walk in the light of the truth,

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 9—13.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 32.

that he may at length attain to the light of everlasting life.' <sup>3</sup> Such would appear to be the full scope and signification of the words before us. And, so interpreted, they convey to us the important truth that *the Light*, so long expected and predicted, is come into the world; and that, as the result of its coming, it will ultimately enlighten all nations; while, in the mean time, it pours into every believing heart a flood of life, and happiness, and peace!

But, O my brethren, how awful was the darkness, which this Sun of Righteousness came to dispel! It was a darkness so awful, that *though he was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet the world knew him not; yea, he came unto his own, but his own received him not! He came unto his own land;* <sup>4</sup> the chosen and favoured land, where God had delighted to dwell and to manifest his favour; and yet, *his own people,* <sup>5</sup> the very people whom God had chosen to be his above all other nations, to whom he had given his laws, and whom he had signally protected and favoured; even *his own people received him not.*

The evangelist adds, however, that *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his*

<sup>3</sup> Collect for St. John the Evangelist's Day.

<sup>4</sup> εἰς τὰ ἴδια.

<sup>5</sup> οἱ ἴδιοι.

*name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* And this leads us to inquire what it is to receive this true *Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* It is to recognize him, as our God, our Saviour, our Mediator ; it is to repose our whole confidence in his merits and his grace ; and to obey his word, to follow his light, and to live according to his Gospel. That we are to understand the phrase in this extensive sense, is evident from the other characteristics which the evangelist gives of those who receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The one is, that they *believe on his name* ; putting their whole trust in all his divine perfections, and in all the gracious promises of the everlasting covenant : the other is, that they are *born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* The original word,<sup>6</sup> here rendered *blood*, should be rendered, in the plural number, *bloods*. It may perhaps allude to that pride of ancestry, which was so common among the Jewish people. And we may therefore understand the evangelist as saying, with respect to those who receive the Lord Jesus, that it is not by natural descent, or by adoption, or by any human power or agency, that they become the children of the Most High ; but that it is God only who confers

<sup>6</sup> αἱμάτων.

on them this blessed privilege, and who gives them power to walk as dear children, in the spirit of adoption.

Yes, brethren, to all who thus *receive* the Lord Jesus Christ; to all who thus *believe on his name*; to all who are thus *born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*: in other words, to all who, forsaking all human dependence, and casting off all confidence in the flesh, go at once to the throne of grace, and beseech God to adopt them into his family; to all such, he *giveth power*,<sup>7</sup> or *the right*, or *privilege*, to become the sons of God. The same word is used in the book of Revelation,<sup>8</sup> where we read of those who have "right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And, in each passage, it expresses the glorious liberty or privilege which is enjoyed by all the children of God; seeing that they can say, with St. Paul, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."<sup>9</sup> It is a *power*, or *right*, or *privilege*, which enables every child of God to draw near "with boldness to the throne of grace;"<sup>1</sup> regarding all the things of this world as being his in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> It is a *privilege*, which enables

<sup>7</sup> ἐξουσίαν. See the marginal reading.

<sup>8</sup> See Rev. xxii. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Heb. xiii. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

him to "rejoice" not only in "hope of the glory of God,"<sup>3</sup> but "in tribulations also." And, above all, it is a *privilege*, which enables God's children, even as they pass through "the valley of the shadow of death,"<sup>4</sup> to show their triumphant assurance, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>5</sup>

But how, it may be asked, can such *power*, such liberty, such holy confidence, ever belong to those, who, being 'born in sin and the children of wrath,'<sup>6</sup> can of right look for nothing but utter condemnation? The evangelist answers, Because the Eternal Word has *given* them this *power*. It is plain, therefore, that the foundation of this *right*, or *privilege*, is not in believers. No, beloved; they must, indeed, confess that they are "not worthy to be called his sons;"<sup>7</sup> but that it must be altogether ascribed to that grace, of which the Eternal Word 'is the only Author and Giver.' He acquired this *right* for us, by "bringing in everlasting righteousness."<sup>8</sup> And he has given this *right* to us by

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 2, 3.<sup>4</sup> Ps. xxiii. 4.<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 38, 39.<sup>6</sup> *Church Catechism.*<sup>7</sup> Luke xv. 19.<sup>8</sup> Dan. ix. 24.

the influences of that Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes to see the *power*, which that "everlasting righteousness" has imparted to us, and who teaches our hearts and faculties to use this *power* aright. And who that considers what this gift implies, does not behold, in it, the virtual accomplishment of all the prophetic declarations respecting the Messiah? For this was the greatest gift, which could possibly be bestowed on the children of men. And here, therefore, are abundantly realized the words of that gracious promise, "Unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." <sup>9</sup>

My brethren, Do you desire that this privilege should be yours? Do you desire that you may be known as "his seed" among the nations, and as "his offspring" among the people; so that "all that see you shall acknowledge that you are the seed which the Lord hath blessed?" <sup>1</sup> O, go to Him, the Eternal Word, who only can *give you power to become the sons of God*, and pray that his Spirit may descend into your hearts, enabling you to "cry, Abba, Father." <sup>2</sup> The Scriptures declare to you, that if you are "children," you are also "heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs

<sup>9</sup> Isa. lvi. 5.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 15, compared with Gal. iv. 6.

with Christ.”<sup>3</sup> And remember that, unlike the possessions of this world, the inheritance of the saints in light is an inheritance, of which all God’s children are invited freely and fully to partake. Yea, *as many as receive* the Lord Jesus, to all such *giveth* he this unspeakable *privilege*. I call upon ALL of you, therefore, to *receive* the Lord Jesus into your hearts by faith, that so you may ALL “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>4</sup> And, while you thus look forward to the glory which is laid up for you hereafter, think, my believing brethren, how great is your present privilege, in being God’s children by faith in Jesus.

The title of God’s children was indeed given to the people of Israel, under the Old Testament dispensation. But what were their privileges compared with yours? They were under a schoolmaster: you have “received that Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.”<sup>5</sup> They were “in bondage under the elements of the world:”<sup>6</sup> you are called to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”<sup>7</sup> They had only an obscure hope of blessedness in the life to come: you are enjoying all those gospel promises, and all those gospel consolations,

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 17, compared with Gal. iv. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. v. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. iv. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. v. 1.



which are the earnest and the foretaste of our everlasting inheritance. They came unto "the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest."<sup>8</sup> "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."<sup>9</sup> O enter, then, into this great and glorious family. And while you thus hold secret communion with all those holy ones of God, who, in whatever age or country, have *borne witness of the light*, pray that you yourselves may walk as children of light, reflecting, in all your life and conversation, the brightness of him who *lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, and looking forward to that day, when all who have had the *privilege of becoming the sons of God*, under the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall "have right to the tree of life," and shall "enter in through the gates," into that eternal city, which hath "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of them which are saved shall

<sup>8</sup> Heb. xii. 18.<sup>9</sup> Heb. xii. 22—24.

walk in the light of it; and they shall reign for ever and ever.”<sup>1</sup>

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### SECTION III.

#### CHAP. I. ver. 14—18.

##### INTRODUCTION.

##### OUTWARD AND INWARD EVIDENCES OF CHRIST'S MANIFESTATION TO THE WORLD.

The evangelist has shown, that although “not received by his own,” the Word had accomplished what had been written concerning him, and had brought in everlasting righteousness. Now, lest any one should object to the testimony of his disciples, as resting on partial or insufficient grounds, he goes on to show, more particularly, how remarkable were the circumstances attending the manifestation of Christ's glory. From whence it would necessarily follow, that they had not affirmed anything rashly, but had declared the things of which they were well persuaded. For if, on the one hand, they had been

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 14; xxi. 23, 24; xxii. 5.

outwardly convinced, by undoubted signs, that the glory which shone around the Word was indeed divine ; and if, on the other hand, they had been made inwardly partakers of the grace of his salvation, then it could no longer be doubted that they were, in every way, qualified to bear testimony respecting the great mystery of redemption. Accordingly, these two effects of the manifestation of Jesus Christ form the subject of the fourteenth and four following verses, in the two former of which St. John speaks of the outward, and, in the three latter, of the inward evidences of this manifestation.

It is in the fourteenth verse that the evangelist shows the manner in which Christ's glory was outwardly manifested to the world ; and he follows this up, in the fifteenth verse, by the testimony of John the Baptist.

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake : He that cometh after me, is preferred before me : for he was before me.*<sup>1</sup>

You will observe, and the circumstance is signally important, that neither the name Jesus, nor the title Christ, is here introduced by the

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 14, 15.

evangelist. The name did not belong to the Son of man, till his circumcision on the eighth day after his birth. And the title belonged only to his office of Messiah, which was not exercised by him till thirty years afterwards. But the *Word* was an appellation which belonged to him who was made man, long before the period of his incarnation. It was a name clearly appropriate to him in that state of glory which he "had with the Father before the world was."<sup>2</sup> Had St. John declared that Jesus, or that Christ, made the world, he might have been laughed to scorn. Had he said that Jesus, or that Christ, *was made flesh*, he might have been derided for an assertion that conveyed no useful or important information. But he has done otherwise. He has affirmed that *the Word was made flesh*. And thus he has done all that language can do, to strangle error and heresy in their very birth.<sup>3</sup>

Having thus shown with what propriety our Lord is here denominated *the Word*, I would now ask you to consider the full scope and signification of the rest of the language which St. John employs. It is here affirmed, of *the Word*, *made flesh*, that *he dwelt among us full of grace and truth*. Observe, how it is said that he *dwelt*, or

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> See *Le Bas' Sermons*, vol. ii.

*tabernacled*,<sup>4</sup> among us, even as the Shekinah, or divine glory, dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness. So that the Eternal Word condescended to dwell here on earth in human nature, and visibly to display his glory among the children of men. And how did he thus *tabernack* among us? *Full of grace and truth!* Full, that is, of those two perfections, which contain the beginning and the end of the great work of redemption. For what is the origin of this mysterious dispensation, but the exercise of the freest *grace* toward a rebellious world? And what shall be its consummation, but the ultimate developement of divine *truth*, in the full accomplishment of the divine promises? And these two perfections may be regarded as the fountains of the sinner's hope; since the original purpose of God is unchangeable, and since his promises can never fail. 'Truly,' says Calvin, 'when Christ went upon the waters dry foot, when he drove away devils, and when he sufficiently declared his power by other miracles, it might have been known that he was the only begotten Son of God. But the evangelist bringeth forth those particular features, in the manifestation of his glory, by which faith reapeth the sweetest fruit. For the believer is here taught to look to Jesus

<sup>4</sup> ἐσκήνωσεν.

Christ, as that fountain of *grace and truth*, which is perpetually flowing for the comfort and refreshment of his people.'

We may also suppose that St. John here refers to the pillar of fire, and the cloud, which guarded the tabernacle in the wilderness. For as the fire betokened the holiness and *truth* of Jehovah; so the cloud, which surrounded it, well prefigured the divine mercy and *grace*, by which that holiness is attempered. These were the types of that divine *Word*, who, when he was *made flesh, dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: full of truth*, as accomplishing the types, predictions, and prophecies of the Old Testament: *full of grace*, as exercising all the offices of love and mercy to mankind, and as communicating all grace to those who came to him for it; and *full of grace and truth*, as evinced in the gracious truths, and the divine instructions, which he imparted to all around him, concerning the things of God and the eternal world.

*And we beheld his glory*, continues the evangelist, speaking of the *glory* of Him, who is *the fulness of truth*, to fulfil all the types, predictions, and prophecies of the Old Testament, and *the fulness of grace*, to accomplish everlasting righteousness: *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.* Yes, brethren, as we are here informed, in a parenthesis, this *glory*

the apostles *beheld*: even the *glory* of Christ's power, wisdom, knowledge, holiness, truth, and grace; and they were well assured that these attributes were such as became the character and person of *the only begotten of the Father*. Moreover, in these words, *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, a reference may be had both to the baptism and the transfiguration of our Lord. For it is probable that our evangelist was present, on the former occasion, as one of the Baptist's disciples. And we know that Peter, who, together with James and John, had witnessed the transfiguration, thus refers to it in his second epistle: "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." <sup>5</sup>

Dwell, brethren, on the language of this remarkable verse, and you will surely feel that, in all this, there is a silent contrast between the tabernacling of the divine Word, and the Shekinah in the temple. The one was only exhibited on some particular occasions, and under particular restrictions; and even then, the beholders had not, in general, eyes to see, or hearts to understand, the glory which was thus mani-

<sup>5</sup> 2 Pet. i. 16, 17.

fested. But it was not so with the Antitype. For, on the one hand, the divine Word *dwelt among*, and familiarly conversed with, his chosen people ; and, on the other hand, they were enabled to perceive and acknowledge his glory.

You may observe, also, how admirably the language which the evangelist employs, is adapted to the majesty of the person whom he describes. For, having spoken all along of *the Word*, as eternally and truly divine, and coming now to speak of his existing in a manner different from that in which he had existed heretofore, St. John, in order to remove any suspicion of His being degraded by that condescension, employs phrases well known to the Jews, and such as plainly allude to those appearances, under the Old Testament dispensation, which they acknowledged to belong to the true God only. These are plain intimations, therefore, that the same divinity, which then filled their tabernacle, and ark of the testimony, had now chosen a human body for his tabernacle. And, as he then exhibited himself to their fathers by a shining *glory*, and by other miraculous tokens of his presence ; so was this same presence rendered sufficiently conspicuous, in this other tabernacle, by such distinguishing characters and wonderful operations, as proved the person bearing and doing them, to be truly



divine. Here then, my brethren, is the mystery, never to be sufficiently admired and adored ; viz. that the Son of God should vouchsafe to become the Son of man, thereby to make us the sons of God.<sup>6</sup> Here we have an assurance of a privilege, of which it had been the highest presumption to entertain a thought, had not the Son of God united our nature to his own ; and, by taking part with the adopted, admitted them to take part with *the only begotten*. ‘ And surely,’ says Dean Stanhope, ‘ when we reflect on this stupendous subject, we must immediately perceive that the divinity of the *Eternal Word* is at least equally evident in his being *made flesh*, as in his

<sup>6</sup> ‘ Whereas it was, “Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” it is now reversed : “flesh and blood *shall*,” for “flesh and blood already *doth*.” And this is what St. John establishes in this part of the chapter. For when he says, at the twelfth verse, “To them gave he power to become the sons of God ;” what is this but an inference from the truth set forth in the fourteenth verse, viz. that “the Word was made flesh ?” Since, if the Son of God has been made the Son of man, it is not incredible but that the sons of men may be made the sons of God. Yea, it is not only not incredible, but a kind of bond has been entered, *security* has been given. “THE WORD” has been “MADE FLESH ;” and well, therefore, may “flesh” have reciprocal hope to be regenerated by “the Word,” and adopted through grace, and so exalted to the glorious dignity of the sons of God.’—*Bishop Andrews*. Sermon on John i. 14.

having “made all things.”<sup>7</sup> For, could a power which is infinite admit of difficulties and degrees, must we not conceive it more wonderful, that God should appear in the form of weakness, than that he should exert himself in the utmost activity and strength? Must we not conceive it more wonderful, that God should make himself of no reputation, and be found in fashion as a man, than that he should glorify himself by producing a whole world out of nothing? Must we not conceive it more wonderful, that God should become obedient to the death of the cross, and should submit to be murdered by his enemies, than that he should blast all that hate him with the breath of his displeasure, and should command the whole world back to nothing with the word of his mouth?<sup>8</sup>

The above argument, taken from the outward manifestation of Christ’s glory, is strengthened, in the fifteenth verse, by the testimony of John the Baptist: *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake: He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.* It seems most probable that the above words were uttered by John the Baptist, at our Lord’s baptism. For they appear to contain an exclamation of joy, at beholding the pre-

<sup>7</sup> Verse 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Stanhope on the Epistles and Gospels.*

sent Saviour: *John cried<sup>9</sup> out, and said, This was he of whom I spake.* And since it is generally supposed that our evangelist had been one of the Baptist's disciples, before he was called by our Lord, may we not conjecture that he now recalled to mind, with sacred delight, how it was that he himself had been first led to acknowledge the *glory* of Jesus Christ? These words of John the Baptist had so deeply penetrated his soul, that, as often as he pondered within himself how light had darted into his mind, when he first heard the Baptist's joyful exclamation, he was able, from his own blessed experience, to say, of *the glory* which he had then beheld, that it was *the glory as of the only begotten of the Father!*

And how clear is the testimony which these words afford to *the glory* of the eternal Word: *This was he of whom I spake: He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.* 'In these words,' says Bishop Pearson, 'first he taketh to himself a priority of time, saying of Christ, *He that cometh after me.* For so he came after him, into the womb, at his conception; into the world, at his nativity; into his office, at his baptism; always after John, and at the same distance. But, secondly, he attributeth unto Christ a priority of dignity; *He is preferred*

<sup>9</sup> κέκραγε.

*before me.* And, thirdly, he rendereth the reason or cause of that great dignity which belonged to Christ, saying, *for, or, rather, because he was before me.* And being the cause must be supposed different and distinct from the effect, therefore the priority last mentioned cannot be that of dignity. For to assign anything as the cause or reason of itself, is a great absurdity; and the expression of it, a vain tautology. Wherefore that priority must have relation to time or duration, as the very tense, *he was before me*, signifieth, and so be placed in opposition to his *coming after him.* As if John the Baptist had thus spoken at large: This man Christ Jesus, who came into the world, and entered on his prophetic office six months after me, is, notwithstanding, of far more worth and greater dignity than I am: even so much greater, that I must acknowledge myself “unworthy” to stoop down and “unloose his shoe’s latchet.”<sup>1</sup> And the reason of this dignity is, from the excellency of that nature which he had before I was: for, though *he cometh after me*, yet *he was before me.*<sup>2</sup>

The evangelist, having thus described the outward manifestation of Christ’s glory, proceeds, in the sixteenth and two following verses, to speak of the inward experience which the dis-

<sup>1</sup> Verse 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Bishop Pearson’s Exposition of the Creed*, Art. ii.

ing the superlative degree of comparison, used simply to repeat the word. And here, therefore, *grace for grace* may be understood to mean a large abundance of spiritual blessings, even *grace upon grace*, freely bestowed upon man, consisting of pardon, redemption, protection, and sanctification ; with peace here, and heaven hereafter. But that the evangelist is here speaking, more immediately, of the superiority of the Gospel dispensation, is evident from the seventeenth verse, in which he strengthens his present argument by saying, *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* That is, to adopt the paraphrase of Bishop Hall: ' If your thoughts fly back to the ancient courses of God's favour to his people by the hand of Moses, as if, under and by him, grace were conveyed to men: yet know that, howsoever the law was indeed *given* by the hand of *Moses*, yet as the *truth* of those promises, which were shadowed out in the law, is accomplished and fulfilled in *Jesus Christ*; so the *grace* and power of performing all those good duties, which the law requireth, is only given by Christ, and wrought by his Spirit.' Moses, as a servant, could only publish the law, and declare the will of his Lord. But it belonged to Him, who, by his name *Jesus*, is declared to be the author of all *grace*; and who, by his title *Christ*, is also declared to be

the promised Messiah, in whom, therefore, is all *truth*; it belonged to the Lord *Jesus Christ* to subdue us by his *grace*, and to accomplish in us the *truth* of his promises, by changing hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Observe, also, how clear is the distinction here made, by the evangelist, between the dignity of Moses and of Christ. The *law* was only *given* through the ministry of *Moses*; but *grace and truth came, or were made,*<sup>7</sup> *by Jesus Christ*. The *law* did not proceed from, though it was delivered by, *Moses*; but *grace and truth came* forth from the bosom of *Jesus Christ*, as the highest and best gifts which could be bestowed on man.

Here, therefore, it is plainly declared that we are to regard *Jesus Christ*, not simply as the instrument of proclaiming, but as being himself the very Fountain<sup>8</sup> of *grace and truth*. Indeed, *grace and truth* were made and *came* by him, in a certain sense, from the beginning of the world; since they have been in a measure enjoyed by all, who have been admitted into the kingdom of glory. But they *came*, in the fullest sense, after the accomplishment of the work of redemption, when *Jesus Christ* openly acquired this *grace* for us by his blood, and began to apply it to us by his Spirit; and when he thus proved himself to

<sup>7</sup> It is the same word, *ἐγένετο*, which is so translated in the third verse.

<sup>8</sup> See verse 3.

died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"<sup>1</sup>

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## SECTION IV.

### CHAP. I. VERSE 19—28.

#### JOHN THE BAPTIST'S ANSWER TO THE DEPUTIES FROM THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

The introductory part of this Gospel closes with the eighteenth verse, and the evangelist now enters upon the history of Jesus Christ. He begins with the ministry of John the Baptist; and with that part of it which immediately preceded the public ministry of our blessed Lord. For, omitting all the circumstances mentioned by the other three evangelists, with respect to the first thirty years of the life of Jesus Christ, he enters at once upon the history of those matters which, as having been publicly transacted in Judea and Galilee, show how clearly His mediatorial

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 28, 29.

glory had been manifested before the eyes of all. It may be added, that St. John evidently desired to narrate those things, of which he himself had been an eye-witness. And, as it is highly probable that he had been one of the Baptist's disciples, we may conclude, therefore, that he judged it best to begin with those testimonies of the Baptist to Jesus, which had been uttered within his own hearing. He has already repeated, in the introductory part of this Gospel,<sup>1</sup> the testimony borne by John to our Lord at his baptism, at which the evangelist had probably been present. And now, omitting the narrative of our Lord's fasting and temptation, he opens his history at the period of his return to the Baptist after the temptation, with which return his own call to an attendance upon him had been so closely connected.

The following testimony of the Baptist to Jesus, was given<sup>2</sup> on the very day preceding our Lord's return to him after the temptation. And may we not regard it, therefore, as having been ordered, by the peculiar providence of God, that, just before the Baptist "saw" our Lord "coming unto him,"<sup>3</sup> the very elders of the Jews should thus have afforded an occasion for a testimony, which, in a manner, prepared the way for the approaching Saviour?

*And this is the record of John, when the Jews*

See verse 15.

<sup>2</sup> See verse 29.

<sup>3</sup> See verse 29.



quirers, in the first instance, by at once refuting their erroneous notions, he might not have been permitted to give them any further information on the subject of their inquiry.

It was under the same erroneous impression with respect to the reappearance of some other prophet, besides Elijah, before the coming of the Messiah, that the priests and Levites asked John the Baptist, whether he were *that other prophet*, meaning Jeremiah, or some other of the ancient prophets, who were expected to be raised from the dead. And, upon his still returning the same answer, they then said unto him, *Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?* He said,<sup>1</sup> *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*

Observe how prudently John the Baptist here refers to the words of a prophet, whose authority the Jewish council would at once admit. And observe, also, with what humility, as well as prudence, he selects, out of all the prophecies respecting himself, a passage so peculiarly suited to remove the false impressions of the Jews, as to any external splendour in the ministry of the herald, who was to prepare the way of the Lord. He was to be only a voice, crying in the wilderness; a sound, which, as soon as it has expressed

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 3.

the thought, of which it is the sign, dies into the air, and is known no more.

Surely, brethren, when we consider the person and the office of John the Baptist, we may, with some of the ancient fathers, imagine this distinguished servant of the Most High, standing on the confines of the Law and the Gospel, upon ground distinct from both, but bordering upon each, proclaiming to the world that the former had passed away, and that the latter was about to come forth from God, to fulfil those counsels which were hidden in the Eternal Mind from the foundation of the world. And we must feel that he was clearly entitled to claim all the respect, and all the submission, that would have been willingly rendered to Elijah, had he descended from those heavens, to which the chariot of fire had borne him. Yet, with the consciousness of these high qualities, the Baptist declined assuming the name and title of his exalted predecessor. He was content, rather, to take the least ostentatious character, by which the Spirit of prophecy had marked him. He was content to be listened to as *a voice in the wilderness*, calling the world to make ready for the reception of the Lord. And most emphatically did these words of the prophet apply to him, the whole tenor of whose life was, as it were, *a voice*,

calling upon men to repent, and turn to the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

*And they which were sent, were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water : but there standeth one among you whom ye know not ; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.<sup>2</sup>*

The evangelist here mentions, that the priests and Levites, who were sent from Jerusalem, to inquire concerning the Baptist's character and mission, were Pharisees. And he mentions this, because they strenuously opposed any innovations in religion, which were opposed to the traditions of the Elders, and because their decisions were held by the common people as infallible. As their sect had declared, therefore, that only proselytes were to be baptized, they found fault with John for baptizing his own countrymen. And here we may pause to remark, that the circumstance noticed in the twenty-fourth verse, viz. that *they which were sent were of the Pharisees*, is precisely one of those incidental and minute allusions, which would not have occurred to an impostor in forging a book, and which

<sup>1</sup> See *Le Bas' Sermons*, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 24—27.

strongly corroborates the truth of the whole narrative. For the Pharisees, who composed a great part of the council at Jerusalem, were, as I have said, very tenacious of rites and customs, of traditions and ceremonies. And although they admitted that those rites might be increased, yet they did not suppose that any addition could be made, except by the authority of a prophet, or of the Messiah. When, therefore, John came baptizing, the question was, whether he had authority to institute a new rite; so that it might be received among the authorised ceremonies of their religion. Now this was a question in which the Sadducees, who composed another part of the council, did not feel any interest, since they rejected all such rites at once. And, therefore, though many of the Sadducees came to John's baptism,<sup>3</sup> it seems that they did not join in sending to him to know what was his design.

Some commentators are of opinion that, in this last question, *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?* the deputies of the council referred to an expectation which then prevailed, founded on a literal interpretation of certain passages in Ezekiel and Zechariah,<sup>4</sup> that, in the times of the Messiah,

<sup>3</sup> See Matt. iii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27; Zech. xiii. 1.

the Jews would all be baptized, either by the Messiah himself, or, at least, in his presence. And in the answer, therefore, which John the Baptist returns to them, implying that baptism was administered by him, as the servant of the Messiah, he silently upbraids them for their ignorance, in regarding the administration of baptism, as one of the marks of the person of the Messiah. *I baptize*, indeed, says the Baptist, in order to show you the nature and necessity of repentance. But, in so doing, I act only as the servant of the Messiah, *whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose*. For I baptize *with water* only, which cannot cleanse you from your sins, as the washing predicted by Zechariah will do. "In that day," says the prophet Zechariah, "there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." And that inward purification can proceed only from Him, whose peculiar office it is to "baptize with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,"<sup>5</sup> and who is at present standing *among you*, though *ye know him not*.

*He it is*, the Baptist emphatically adds, with an evident allusion to Malachi's prophecy respecting himself, as coming in the Spirit and power of Elias, *He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me*. That is, "The Messenger

<sup>5</sup> Matt. iii. 11.

of the Covenant,"<sup>6</sup> whose way I am appointed to prepare, is so far *preferred before me* in office, as he was ever before me in his divine nature, that I am not worthy to perform the lowest menial service for him. These words, *Who, coming after me, is preferred before me*, are a repetition of the fifteenth verse. And the uniformity of the Baptist's testimony on this point, indicates, at once, his firm persuasion of the truth itself, and his constancy in declaring it. There is, moreover, a peculiar emphasis in these words, as now immediately addressed to the deputies from the council at Jerusalem. For he thus plainly admits, that though he was not Elias, in the sense understood by the Pharisees, he was, in very deed, that Elias, of whom Malachi spoke; since after him was more immediately following that mysterious being, who, as the angel of the covenant, was to be *preferred before him*.

It is conjectured by some, and certainly the conjecture gives additional beauty and pathos to the language of the Baptist, that, in the words, *Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose*, he not only acknowledges, generally, his unworthiness, as a child of Adam, but alludes to himself in particular, as well knowing that he was not to have the privilege of attending his Lord, as one of his disciples, during his earthly ministry.

<sup>6</sup> Mal. iii. 1.

In this view, the words imply that it would be for others to enjoy the high prerogative, not only of being admitted, so to speak, into the household of Christ, while he was on earth, but also of going forth, as his ministers, to erect his kingdom; a work which it was not for him to behold with his eyes, as his days were quickly coming to an end.

The evangelist now adds, that

*These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*<sup>7</sup>

The notice which the evangelist has taken of the above circumstance, may be regarded as an internal evidence of the truth of the history; while we learn, from this remark, that the Baptist had uttered his testimony not in an obscure corner, but openly, in a well-known and much-frequented place, whither multitudes were continually resorting, some to be baptized by him, and some from the necessity of passing over the Jordan, on their way to and from Judæa. And do we not see, in all this, the singular providence of God, ordering everything for the public manifestation of the Messiah's glory? For it was now made abundantly evident, both to the great body of the Jewish people, and also to the council at Jerusalem, that the Messiah was entering upon his public

<sup>7</sup> Verse 28.

ministry. But, notwithstanding all that was witnessed at Bethabara by the deputies from the council, the minds of its members were only the more alienated from John the Baptist, on account of the message which the Baptist returned to them. And we must surely feel, therefore, that persons thus opposed to the truth, even from its first promulgation, were altogether without excuse.

Moreover, when we read that *these things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan*, we should call to mind that Joshua had formerly put the people of God in possession of the promised land, by a miraculous passage through the same river. That passage through the *Jordan*, which had been, as it were, a second baptism, was soon followed by a second passover;<sup>a</sup> and, immediately afterwards, the manna ceased to be given. Such were the things which had taken place, at this very spot, in former generations. And they aptly prefigured that which Jesus Christ was to do, in truth, by washing his people from their sins, and so preparing them for that heavenly kingdom, where all figures shall for ever cease; where will be seen the very Paschal Lamb; and where, instead of all outward ordinances, and all temporary refreshments, whether

<sup>a</sup> See Josh. v. 10, compared with Numb. ix. 5.



for our souls or bodies, an eternal paschal feast will be prepared for all, whose robes are washed and made white in His blood !

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## SECTION V.

### CHAP. I. ver. 29—34.

#### JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY TO THE PEOPLE RESPECTING JESUS CHRIST.

We now proceed to consider the second testimony of John the Baptist concerning Christ; being that which he gave publicly, in the presence of the assembled multitudes, on the day of Christ's return to him, after His fasting and temptation in the wilderness. The former part of this testimony (ver. 29—31) would seem to have been given as Jesus approached the Baptist; the latter (ver. 32—34) on the same day, when Jesus had again departed from him.

*The next day*, that is, on the day following the departure of the deputies from the council at

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Jerusalem, *John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith,*<sup>1</sup> *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me : for he was before me. And I knew him not : but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come, baptizing with water.*<sup>2</sup>

Jesus came again unto the Baptist, that he might strengthen and confirm, by his own presence, the testimony which the Baptist had just delivered, with such solemnity, respecting him ; that he might encourage and animate the Baptist in the discharge of his arduous office ; and that he might publicly exhibit himself to Israel. As Jesus drew near, the Baptist said, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the*

<sup>1</sup> Ch. i. 29. 'Having now been inaugurated by the waters of baptism, the testimony from heaven, the anointing of the Spirit, and the conquest over temptation, into his high office, the Messiah presents himself to his forerunner, who immediately hails him as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world.' . . . 'This salutation of the Baptist was the completion of all prophecy. From this time, the voice of inspiration, under the law of the old covenant, utterly ceased. The Messiah was come, and he was standing among them. The Lamb of God was preparing himself for the fearful sacrifice.'—*Townsend* in loc.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 29—31.

world. And how significant is the language which is here employed !

1. Let us, first of all, consider the Lord Jesus Christ under the title of *the Lamb*. Among the Jews, a lamb was killed and eaten at the Passover, to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt. A lamb was also offered in the temple, every morning and evening, as a part of the daily worship.<sup>3</sup> A lamb, also, as an emblem of patience, meekness, and gentleness, aptly prefigured Him, of whom the prophet Isaiah declares, that "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter;" and that "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." <sup>4</sup> On all these accounts, Jesus was called *the Lamb*. But it may be supposed that the Baptist here referred more particularly to the Paschal Lamb, because it appears that "the passover was at hand;"<sup>5</sup> and because he was naturally desirous, therefore, of directing the minds of the people to the true Paschal Lamb. "slain from the foundation of the world."<sup>6</sup>

Let us pause, then, for a while, to trace, in some important particulars, the correspondence between the lamb of the Jewish passover, and this 'very Paschal Lamb, which was offered

<sup>3</sup> See Exod. xxix. 38, 39.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. liii. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Chap. ii. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. xiii. 8.

for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world.’<sup>7</sup>

And, first, let us dwell on the correspondence between the typical paschal lamb and the person of Christ. “Your lamb,” said Jehovah, by the mouth of his servant Moses, “shall be without blemish.”<sup>8</sup> And does not this fitly represent Him, whom St. Peter describes as “a Lamb without blemish and without spot,”<sup>9</sup> and whose blood is so “precious,” that, in the book of Revelation, St. John describes the redeemed in heaven as having “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>1</sup> As the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he could easily have delivered himself out of the hands of his enemies: for he had only to “pray to his Father,” and he would “presently have given him more than twelve legions of angels.”<sup>2</sup> But, in obedience to his Father’s will, and out of compassion to the souls of men, he submitted, as the Lamb of God, to bear the burthen of those sins which would otherwise have plunged the world into irreversible perdition. The lamb was also to be “a male of the first year.”<sup>3</sup> And does not this remind us of Him, of whom the prophet speaks as a “child to be born,” and “a son to be

<sup>7</sup> *Preface for Easter Day, in the Communion office.*

<sup>8</sup> Exod. xii. 5.      <sup>9</sup> 1 Pet. i. 19.      <sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 53.      <sup>3</sup> Exod. xii. 5.

given;"<sup>4</sup> and whom St. John describes as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."<sup>5</sup> Again, the lamb was to be "taken out from the sheep." And, accordingly, "Christ our Passover," in order that he might be "sacrificed"<sup>6</sup> for our sins, did first become one of us: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," and was made "in all things like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."<sup>7</sup>

Let us observe, in the next place, the correspondence between the paschal lamb and the sufferings of Christ. It was the command of Jehovah, that the paschal lamb was to be "roasted with fire."<sup>8</sup> Not to dwell upon what has been remarked by one of the Fathers of the early church,<sup>9</sup> viz. that there was, in the very manner of the roasting, a remarkable symbol of the punishment of the cross; I would here only observe how emphatically this command speaks to us of the sharp and dreadful pains of Him, who endured, on our account, the fierceness of the Father's anger, which is briefly but power-

<sup>4</sup> Isa. ix. 6.<sup>5</sup> Rev. xiii. 8.<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.<sup>7</sup> Heb. ii. 14, 17.<sup>8</sup> Exod. xii. 8.<sup>9</sup> *Justin Martyr.*

fully described as “burning like fire.”<sup>1</sup> Hence that touching complaint of the suffering Jesus, “My heart in the midst of my body is even like melting wax. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums.”<sup>2</sup> There was, also, a remarkable correspondence between the type and the Antitype, with respect to the place and the time in which each was killed as a sacrifice. The place was the same as to both, viz. the “place which the Lord did choose to place his name there,”<sup>3</sup> which, from the reign of David, was at Jerusalem. And the time was also the same, for, as it was “between the two evenings”<sup>4</sup> that the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel were to kill their passover, so it was “between the two evenings,” i. e. between noon and sunset, that Christ our Passover expired on the cross.

We may observe, thirdly, that some of the blessed fruits of the death of Christ were remarkably typified by the sacrifice of the paschal lamb; such as protection and salvation by his blood, of which the sprinkling of the door-posts with the blood of the lamb, as a token upon the houses where “the Israelites were,” that the “plague should not be upon them to destroy

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxix. 5; lxxxix. 46; Jer. iv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxii. 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. xvi. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xii. 6, marg.

them,"<sup>5</sup> was a designed and illustrious emblem. It is in allusion to this remarkable type, that the blood of Christ is called "the blood of sprinkling."<sup>6</sup> And may we not regard the same lively emblem, as representing the manner in which we, my brethren, are to be made partakers of these blessed fruits? May we not regard the door-posts, as representing the heart of man, and as thus pointing out to us the gate or door, by which "the King of glory"<sup>7</sup> is to enter, that he may purge us from sin, and which is as manifest in the sight of God as the very doors of our houses are to any one that passes by them? For "man," said God to Samuel, "looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart."<sup>8</sup> The sprinkling of the blood on the door-posts may signify both the purifying of the believer's conscience from the guilt of sin, by the blood of Christ, and the purifying of his heart and affections from the dominion of sin, by that divine grace which his blood has purchased for us. And it is to the latter that we may well believe the apostle to allude, when he bids us "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."<sup>9</sup>

To all this it may be added, that the paschal

<sup>5</sup> Exod. xii. 13.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. i. 2; Heb. xii. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. xxiv. 7.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Heb. x. 22.

lamb was killed before the institution of the sacrifices under the Mosaic law; in order to show that deliverance comes to the children of men, not by any of these sacrifices, but only by the true Passover; by that Lamb of God, which “verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world;”<sup>1</sup> by that very ‘Paschal Lamb, which,’ as our church bids us acknowledge, when we partake, on Easter Day, of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, ‘was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by his death hath destroyed death, and, by his rising to life again, hath restored to us everlasting life.’<sup>2</sup>

But not only is Jesus Christ *the Lamb*: he is also *the Lamb* OF GOD. He is a *Lamb*, not of an earthly, but divine extraction: he is *the Lamb*, of God’s own choosing and appointment; the *Lamb*, appointed by God, approved by God, and most dear to God; the *Lamb*, provided before the foundation of the world. And how is this *Lamb of God* described? Even as he *that taketh away the sin of the world*. It is true, indeed, that he bestows all other benefits upon his chosen people. But the evangelist deems it sufficient to specify this, as the one only fountain from which all the rest are derived; viz. that Christ hath reconciled us unto God, by *taking away the*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Preface for Easter Day, in the Communion office.*



*sin of the world.* Chrysostom observes, that, by the use of the present tense, is here denoted the continuance of the act: *The Lamb of God* is continually taking away *the sin of the world.*<sup>3</sup> For not only is the satisfaction which he once made always in force, but it is his constant work and office to *take away sin.* And this is such a work of time, that it will never be completed, till time shall be no more. For he is always *taking away sin* by the continual intercession of his blood in heaven, and by the continual influence of his grace on earth. And he *taketh away the SIN OF THE WORLD; the sin,* not only of Abraham's, but of Adam's posterity; *the sin* of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. Most truly has it been observed, moreover, of these words, that they stand as an impregnable bulwark against the Socinian heresy. For it is as *a Lamb*, that Christ *taketh away the sin of the world.* Now the lamb, as the type of Christ, took sin away only by its death. And it is plain, therefore, that it is the death of Christ which must take away the guilt, before the Spirit of Christ can remove the dominion, of sin. In reliance, then, upon the merits and efficacy of his death, let us say, 'O Lamb of God, which takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.' And, in dependence upon the gracious influences of his

<sup>3</sup> ὁ ἔκτανε τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.

Spirit, let us add, ‘ O Lamb of God, which takest away the sin of the world, grant us thy peace.’ <sup>4</sup>

When the Baptist again repeats what he had declared on two former occasions,<sup>5</sup> ‘ *This is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man, which is preferred before me : for he was before me ;*’ he not only shows his faithfulness, and his constancy, by speaking of Jesus in the same manner to the assembled multitude, as he had already spoken of him, first, at his baptism, and, afterwards, to the deputies from the council at Jerusalem ; but he plainly declares, also, that although, as *the Lamb of God*, laden with the sins of the world, Jesus might be “ despised and rejected of men,” <sup>6</sup> yet this mysterious self-abasement did not detract anything from his essential glory ; but that, even in the lowly form of a meek and gentle Lamb, he was still THE WORD, who had existed before the Baptist, even from all eternity, and who is described, therefore, in the book of Revelation, as standing “ in the midst of the throne of God.” <sup>7</sup>

The Baptist adds, *And I knew him not* : that is, I was personally unacquainted with him ; *but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.* And do we not here again trace the singular and watchful

<sup>4</sup> *Litany.*

<sup>5</sup> Ver. 15, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. liii. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Rev. v. 6.

providence of God? For since John the Baptist had continued for thirty years an inhabitant of the desert, without holding any intercourse with Jesus, it was thus made manifest to all, that he was not constrained by any bond of human affection, or persuaded by any human arguments, to give this testimony to the Eternal Word. Assuredly, as it strengthens our faith, when we consider that Paul preached the same gospel with the rest of the apostles, though he had not conferred with them;<sup>8</sup> even so is the divine mission of the Baptist established, as on other grounds, so also from this circumstance, that he could not be charged with having been biassed, in the testimony which he bore to Jesus, by any private feelings or by any personal regards. It was thus abundantly evident, that he could not have had any collusion with him of whom he spake, but that he had been indeed "sent from God,"<sup>9</sup> to baptize with the "baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

In the thirty-second and two following verses, we have another testimony of the Baptist, given, as we may suppose, on the same day with the former, after Jesus had again departed from him. That it was delivered separately from the other, we may conclude from what appears to be

<sup>8</sup> Gal. i. 1, 16—20.

<sup>9</sup> Ver. 6.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 4.

a new preface, contained in the words, *And John bare record, saying.* And it is not improbable that this second testimony was added for the greater satisfaction of those, who had heard the first, and who were, probably, at a loss to understand how the Baptist could have borne such a testimony to one whom he had not previously known.

*And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.*<sup>2</sup>

This passage confirms the view which I have taken of the thirty-first verse, viz. as implying that the Baptist had hitherto been personally unacquainted with Jesus. It is plain, indeed, from the passage before us, that the Baptist was not disturbed at seeing Jesus, but that he immediately *bare record*. And we may safely conclude, therefore, that he had previously known Jesus, as to his nature and office, and that he himself had received a commission from heaven as his messenger, to prepare his way. It is pro-

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 32—34.

bable, however, that, until he had thus seen him face to face, he had only declared, generally, that Christ was at hand. But henceforth he began to speak of him, more plainly, as *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*; and to urge the people to receive Him, who was "standing among them,"<sup>3</sup> to bless and to save them. Hitherto, then, he had discharged the office of a prophet; but henceforth he was an evangelist, bearing record of Jesus, that *he is the Son of God*. And must we not here admire the wisdom of God, in thus raising up a witness to defeat the perverseness and malignity of the Jews, in the person of John the Baptist? For the mission of this extraordinary man remains unimpeached even by the Jews themselves. And yet we find that, before Jesus had spoken of himself, John the Baptist had borne record of him, that he was *the Son of God*.

Dwell now, my beloved brethren, upon the passage before you; and again consider how abundantly Christ's divine and mediatorial glory was manifested to the people of Israel, from the very commencement of his ministry. You here behold his forerunner, the Baptist, pointing to him before the assembled multitude, on the banks of the Jordan, and speaking of him as *the Lamb*, yea, as the very *Son of God*. Now this, his

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 26.

public testimony, must have been known to the council at Jerusalem. And may we not ask why they, who appeared so anxious to ascertain, by their deputies, whether Christ was really come, did not proceed to inquire as to the truth of the Baptist's testimony?

How remarkable, moreover, were the circumstances by which this testimony had been preceded! For, as Moses had once called "the heavens" to bear witness against the people of Israel;<sup>4</sup> even so had a sign been given from heaven to the multitude assembled at the Jordan when Christ was baptized. For, as we read in the Gospel by St. Matthew, "the heavens opened," and "the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove, and lighted upon him."<sup>5</sup> It was a dove, in the days of Noah, that came to those within the ark, to assure them that the waters of the deluge were abating. And it was in the form of a dove, therefore, that the Holy Spirit now descended from heaven, to declare that the time was arrived for satisfying divine justice; for rolling back the dark tide of human transgression; and for proclaiming pardon to a rebellious world! For on whom did the Holy Spirit alight and abide? Even upon *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

When the Holy Spirit was given to the apos-

<sup>4</sup> Deut. xxxii. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. iii. 16.

ties, there appeared to them fiery and cloven tongues, because the Gospel was to be preached to every nation under heaven, and to kindle many a holy flame in the hearts of those who heard it. It was thus distinctly implied, also, that there was something within them, which was to be purged from them as by fire; and that they were to be thus quickened and prepared for their heavenly calling. But the Holy Spirit now appeared in the shape of a dove, to denote, at once, the spotless purity, the meekness, and the gentleness of Him upon whom he alighted. And, assuredly, as the believer contemplates the Holy Spirit, "descending from heaven like a dove, and lighting upon" Jesus, he will not only recognize, in Him, the Lamb, without blemish and without spot, but he will also call to mind those gracious words of Jehovah, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Isa. xlii. 1—4, and Matt. xii. 17—21.

SECTION VI.

CHAP. I. ver. 35—42.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY TO TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST. AND ANDREW BRINGING SIMON TO JESUS.

In the following passage, the evangelist relates the third testimony of John the Baptist concerning Jesus, given on the day following that of his arrival on the banks of the Jordan, together with the effects which that testimony produced on the two disciples to whom it was delivered.

*Again, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples ; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.*<sup>1</sup>

It is probable that these two disciples had not been present on the preceding day, and that they had expressed an earnest desire to enjoy the privilege of a personal intercourse with Him, of whom their master had borne testimony, first, to the deputies of the council at Jerusalem, and, afterwards, to the people at large. John the Baptist deems it sufficient to say, on the present occasion,

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 35, 36.



*Behold the Lamb of God*; because he had doubtless spoken to them at large, on former occasions, respecting the character and office of the Messiah. And, in truth, brethren, the name of the *Lamb of God* virtually included every other part of his previous description.

In bearing the above testimony, it was evidently the object of the Baptist, that the disciples to whom he addressed it should thereby be persuaded to leave him, and to follow Christ. For such was his humility, that, instead of being displeased that his disciples should depart from him, it was the earnest desire of his heart, that they should now pass over to a better and more illustrious Teacher. He had always spoken of himself, as only “a voice crying in the wilderness.”<sup>2</sup> And he plainly showed, in every part of his ministry, that he sought not his own glory, but only how he might give honour to Christ, and how he might prepare his own disciples to receive Him, as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”<sup>3</sup>

*And the two disciples heard John speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and*

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 23.<sup>3</sup> Ver. 29.

*saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour: or, according to the marginal interpretation, two hours before night.*<sup>4</sup>

Observe: our Lord does not say, *WHOM seek ye?* for it was evident that they sought himself; but *WHAT seek ye?* That is, *What seek ye of me?* And surely no words could be better suited to touch the hearts, draw forth the affections, and win the confidence, of those who approached him. For Jesus thus declared to them how perfectly he knew, within himself, that they sought something of him. And he thereby afforded them an occasion of speaking to him on all those matters, which had taken such full possession of their minds. Nor should these words of encouragement be restricted to the occasion on which they were uttered. For this gentle and gracious invitation, which was once made to those two disciples, still remains for the encouragement of all who follow Jesus: *What seek ye?*

*One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother,<sup>5</sup> He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith*

<sup>4</sup> Verse 37—39.

<sup>5</sup> 'To show what manner of persons He would have his disciples to be, two of those who were first called to follow our Lord's steps on earth, were literally, and by the course of nature, *brethren*.'—*Bishop Heber.*

unto him, *We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*<sup>6</sup>

It is generally supposed that the other of these two disciples was the evangelist himself, who, according to his usual custom, conceals his own name. And this conjecture is strengthened by the particularity with which he has described, not only the day, but the hour, when the above transaction took place. All the circumstances of that memorable day were deeply engraven on his heart. And he here records them with such minuteness, because this was the day, and the hour, when he was first admitted to the privilege of intimate communion with the Son of God. From the expression applied to Andrew, in the forty-first verse, that he *first*<sup>7</sup> *found his own brother Simon*, it may be conjectured, that both went in search of him, but that Andrew was the first to find him, and bring him to Jesus. Andrew tells his brother, however, that he had a sharer in his present joy. For, speaking in the plural number, he says, *We have found the Messiah*. Yes, beloved, they had found Him, who had been expected for four thousand years. And they had both been so deeply affected with the majesty and efficacy of the words which Jesus had uttered, that they were now come in search of Simon, that they might bring him to Jesus.

<sup>6</sup> Verse 40, 41.

<sup>7</sup> πρῶτος.

*And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone; or, as it is rendered in the margin, Peter.*<sup>8</sup>

We are here told that Jesus *beheld*, or, *looked on*,<sup>9</sup> Simon. And it was now, therefore, that, on first approaching Jesus, Simon felt the power of that look, which was afterwards to pierce his inmost soul, and to bind him, for ever, to the service and love of his Redeemer.<sup>1</sup> Jesus declared his omniscience, by giving him the name of *Cephas*, or, *Peter*,<sup>2</sup> the one Syriac, the other Greek; to show the fortitude and firmness with which He was to labour and to suffer in His cause.

<sup>8</sup> Verse 42.

<sup>9</sup> *εμβλέψας*, compare Luke xxii. 61, 62.

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      \*   \*   \*   \*

‘ One look lives in him, and endears  
 Crosses and wrongs where’er he rove :

That gracious chiding look, Thy call  
 To win him to himself and Thee,  
 Sweetening the sorrow of his fall,  
 Which else were ru’d too bitterly.’

*Keble’s Christian Year.*

\* ‘ It is meet that all the godly be *Peters*, or *stones* ; that so, being founded in Christ, they may be built up together, as the temple of God. But Simon Peter has the name specifically assigned to him, because of his singular excellency.’

—*Calvin.*

And it should also be borne in mind, that what Jesus thus foretold respecting Simon, as soon as he *beheld him*, had been fully established, when John wrote his gospel, by the constancy with which Simon Peter had published the glad tidings of salvation ; “ rejoicing,” amidst all the persecutions to which he was exposed, that he was “ counted worthy to suffer shame”<sup>2</sup> for the name of Jesus.

Before we quit this portion of the chapter, let us dwell, a little more particularly, on the circumstance here recorded of St. Andrew, that he went in search of his brother Simon, to *bring him to Jesus*. And let us consider how striking was the evidence thus afforded, of the reality, and the efficacy, of the work of grace in his soul. The love of truth is, and ever must be, diffusive in its nature. And no one, therefore, who has really embraced the truth for himself, can ever be content with enjoying it himself alone, but will earnestly desire that others, and especially those most near and dear to him, should also partake of the same blessed privilege. When the poor awakened Gadarene, out of whom our Lord had expelled the legion of devils, besought Him that he might follow Him, Jesus sent him away, saying, “ Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done for thee.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v. 41.

And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him.”<sup>3</sup> And it was in the spirit of this exhortation that, before Andrew followed Jesus to the house where he dwelt, he went in search of his own brother Simon, and said unto him, *We have found the Messiah*. ‘Andrew hath scarcely one spark of the true light in his own bosom; and yet doth he immediately endeavour to spread it abroad. And, more especially, is it the desire of his heart, that his brother should walk in the same light.’<sup>4</sup>

I would add, that the same important lesson, as to the diffusive character of true faith, is beautifully, though silently, enforced by the manner in which these two brothers would seem to have been employed, before they were called to a stated attendance on the Lord Jesus Christ. For it would appear,<sup>5</sup> that, after abiding that day with Jesus, both Andrew and Simon returned home, and, for a season, resumed their accustomed occupations. And may we not believe<sup>6</sup> that Andrew employed that season in saying to others among his kindred and acquaintance, as he had said to Simon, *We have found the Messiah*? Yes, brethren, we may be permitted to

<sup>3</sup> Luke viii. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Calvin in loc.

<sup>5</sup> See Matt. iv. 18, 19.

<sup>6</sup> See Mark v. 19; and Luke viii. 39.

indulge the belief, that the hallowed influences and enjoyment of that memorable day were imparted to many a relative, friend, and neighbour, when these two brothers returned to their own home. And, after having been employed in speaking to all around them, of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," what must have been the delight, with which they heard the words of that second invitation, addressed to them by Jesus, as he walked by the sea of Galilee: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!" This must have been an invitation, to which their souls, and all that was within them, must instantly have replied. And, accordingly, we are told by the evangelist, who records this gracious invitation, that *they* "straightway left their nets, and followed him."<sup>8</sup>

Here, brethren, was a call to give up all for Christ, and it was instantly obeyed. And will any one say that the history of Andrew and Simon does not contain any word of instruction for us? Certain it is that, in every age, circumstances have repeatedly occurred, in which the good providence of God has, in like manner, called upon many of the soldiers and servants of

<sup>7</sup> Verse 29.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. iv. 18, 19, compared with Mark i. 16—18; and Luke v. 1—11.

Jesus Christ, to forsake all and follow him. But, not to limit the application to cases of this description, let me remind you, rather, how the passage before us is applied, in the collect for St. Andrew's Day, to Christians, at all times, and under all circumstances, reminding them that, as those who are 'called by God's holy word,' they are 'forthwith to give up themselves obediently to fulfil his holy commandments.'

The festival of St. Andrew is so placed, in our Calendar, as always to coincide with the expiration of one, or the commencement of another christian year. And, therefore, at every return of that anniversary, we should look back on the services of the past year, and consider how they have been suited *to bring us to Jesus*, by exhibiting Him to us, as the sum and substance of them all. We should consider, also, with what a motive we are provided for coming to Jesus, when we remember that, 'in the mystery of his holy incarnation; in his holy nativity and circumcision; in his baptism, fasting, and temptation; in his agony and bloody sweat; in his cross and passion; in his precious death and burial; in his glorious resurrection and ascension; and in the coming of the Holy Ghost,'<sup>9</sup> he is plainly revealed to us, as "redeeming our life from destruction, and crowning us with loving kindness

<sup>9</sup> *Litany.*



and tender mercies.”<sup>1</sup> Yes, beloved, whether we view Christ, as coming forth from the Father, to veil the Godhead in human flesh, or whether we view Him, as leaving the world, and going back to the Father, there to appear, as the great High Priest of the human race; all was done, and is still doing, for our salvation!

Let us pray, therefore, that, with each returning year, the history of our redemption may be applied more closely to our hearts, “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,”<sup>2</sup> that so we may know more of Christ, and his salvation. And, in proportion as He shall “dwell in our hearts by faith,”<sup>3</sup> in the same proportion shall we know what it is ‘obediently to fulfil God’s holy commandments.’ For, when we become children of God by faith in Jesus, we no longer approach him, in “the spirit of bondage,” but in “the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”<sup>4</sup> And, assuredly, if there be a heaven upon earth, it is experienced by those, who are thus enabled, through grace, to approach God as dear children, and who, having obtained “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” can always “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>5</sup> For they feel that they are encouraged to regard God, not as a hard and austere master, but as a

<sup>1</sup> Psa. ciii. 4.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 4.<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 17.<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 15.<sup>5</sup> Rom. v. 1, 2.

loving, reconciled Father. He may, and he will, have charges against them, individually, as a Father; but they are verily persuaded, that he will not bring anything against them, as a Judge. No; their souls rejoice in the gracious declaration, that in Christ Jesus the sentence of condemnation has been blotted out for ever.<sup>6</sup> And though they daily feel and lament the power of indwelling corruption, yet they feel quite assured that, with the help of their God, it shall never have dominion over them; but that they shall go on “from strength to strength,” until “every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.”<sup>7</sup>

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## SECTION VII.

### CHAP. I. ver. 43—51.

JESUS, ON HIS WAY TO GALILEE, CALLETH PHILIP  
AND NATHANAEL.

In the remaining portion of the chapter, the evangelist relates the transactions of the fourth of those days, each of which was deemed worthy

<sup>6</sup> See Rom. viii. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Psa. lxxxiv. 7.

of being recorded in the scriptures of truth. On the first of those four days, John the Baptist bare his testimony concerning Jesus Christ, when the Council at Jerusalem sent deputies to him to inquire who he was, and why he baptized. On the second day, the Baptist called upon the assembled multitude to acknowledge Jesus Christ, as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."<sup>1</sup> It was on the third day, that Andrew and our evangelist, and Simon Peter, became first acquainted with Jesus. And, on the fourth day, Philip and Nathanael partook of the same blessed privilege.

*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*<sup>2</sup>

Our blessed Lord was now about to return to Galilee, that he might there enter on his public ministry; and the probability is, that, from the time of this departure, John the Baptist saw his face no more on earth. Brief, indeed, had been the personal intercourse which the Baptist had enjoyed with Him, whose way he came to prepare. But it was thus made the more evident to all, that there could not be any collusion between them. And we hence learn, moreover, how truly Christ might say, with immediate re-

<sup>1</sup> Verse 29.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 43, 44.

ference to the Baptist, "I receive not testimony from man."<sup>3</sup>

On hearing the words of our Lord's gracious invitation, Philip desired, like Andrew, that others should partake, with him, of his new and unexpected happiness. And accordingly, as our evangelist goes on to relate:

*Philip findeth Nathanael*, who, as it is generally supposed, was chosen an apostle afterwards by the name of Bartholomew, *and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*<sup>4</sup>

Philip might have replied, indeed, that Jesus came not out of Nazareth, but out of Bethlehem in Judea. But it is not improbable that Philip was himself imbued with the erroneous notion, so prevalent among the body of the Jewish people; who, knowing only that Christ had been brought up at Nazareth from his infancy, always spoke of him, as "the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."<sup>5</sup> And, if so, we have, in the passage before us, one out of a multitude of instances, of the manner in which all the errors of our Lord's disciples are freely and candidly admitted. And we see, also, how weak were the beginnings of

Chap. v. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Verse 45, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxi. 11.

knowledge in those persons, who were afterwards to go forth, as the soldiers and servants of Jesus, to "destroy the wisdom of the wise," and to "bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."<sup>6</sup> But, however imperfect might be the knowledge of Philip, as to the real birth-place of the promised Messiah, it is evident that he had been looking for His coming, and that he was fully persuaded that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, *of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write.*

But *Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Nathanael shared, perhaps, in the erroneous expectations of his countrymen, as to the outward splendour and dignity of the expected Messiah. And therefore he was backward to believe that, from a city so insignificant, in itself, as Nazareth, and so spoken against, on account of the general character of its inhabitants, anything *good* should come; much less, one who was expected to restore the kingdom to Israel. *Philip saith unto him, Come and see.* He does not attempt himself to solve the doubt which Nathanael here expressed; but he is fully persuaded that his new master will remove every difficulty, if only Nathanael will consent to make the experiment. And he shows, moreover, that he does not wish

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. i. 19.

Nathanael to trust to his word alone, as well knowing that his faith must rest, not upon any human testimony, but upon that of the Son of God. His language, therefore, is; *Come and see*: Judge not of the things of God, by outward appearances: be not prejudiced against *Jesus of Nazareth* from any circumstances of country or of birth: but *Come and see*; and so judge for yourself, whether we have not found that Messiah, of whom *Moses in the law, and the prophets did write*, in *Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*.

Such, brethren, was the address of Philip to Nathanael. And is it not even thus, that the Scriptures appeal to all, saying; *Come and see*, how gracious the Lord is, and how blessed are all they that put their trust in him! He calls us by his word, by his Spirit, by his ministers, and by his ordinances. But, alas! having eyes, we see not, having ears, we hear not, and having feet, we come not to Him, who so graciously invites us. Oh! brethren, as we value the health of our souls, let us no longer refuse to hear him that calleth. Let it not be our condemnation that when "light is come into the world," we have "loved darkness rather than light."<sup>7</sup> Let it not be said of us, that "we would not come to Jesus, that we might have life."<sup>8</sup> Let us not listen to the misrepresentations of those, who

<sup>7</sup> Chap. iii. 19.<sup>8</sup> Chap. v. 40.

would bring an evil report of the good land. But let us resolve to *come and see*, and judge for ourselves. Let us *come*, that our hearts may be gladdened by the joyful sound of the gospel ; and let us lay all our prejudices, and all our difficulties, upon the altar at Calvary ; that so they may be consumed, at once, in the flame of divine love. Yea, let us pray that, the veil of prejudice and error being taken away, our understandings may be enlightened to perceive, and our affections sanctified to embrace and ever hold fast, the things which belong to our everlasting peace. And let us ever remember, that they only can see Jesus, in all his beauty, as “ the chiefest among ten thousand,”<sup>9</sup> who come to him with singleness of eye, and with simplicity of purpose, and of whom it may be said, therefore, as of the Israelite before us, that “ in their spirit there is no guile.”<sup>1</sup>

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile !<sup>2</sup> Nathanael saith unto him, Whence*

<sup>9</sup> Solomon’s Song, v. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Psa. xxxii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> ‘ And this, it seems, was the life of one who was destined to act the busy part of an apostle ; quietness without, guilelessness within. This was the tranquil preparation for great dangers and sufferings ! We see who make the most heroic Christians, and are the most honoured by Christ.’—*Newman’s Sermons*, vol. ii. serm. 27.

*knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.*<sup>3</sup>

And may we not suppose, my brethren, that Nathanael had been there engaged in devotion, and that he had been pouring out his heart, with peculiar fervency, before God? May we not suppose that he was then seeking direction, concerning the hope and “consolation of Israel,”<sup>4</sup> in some secret retirement, where he knew that no human eye observed him? This conjecture gives additional force and beauty to the narrative before us. And, as we contemplate the guileless Nathanael thus employed, well may we say, in the words of the following stanza :

‘ Oh ! happy hours of heavenward thought !  
How richly crown’d ! how well improv’d !  
In musing o’er the Law he taught,  
In waiting for the Lord he lov’d !’<sup>5</sup>

On hearing the words of Jesus, Nathanael was immediately convinced, that He, who had thus seen him in secret, must be the Lord himself. Before the light of this conviction, all his prejudices vanished; and, employing language far more elevated than that, in which Philip had described Jesus, Nathanael immediately exclaimed, with holy rapture,

<sup>3</sup> Verse 47, 48.

<sup>4</sup> Luke ii. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Keble’s *Christian Year*.



*Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of Israel.*<sup>6</sup>

That is ; Thou art not only *Jesus of Nazareth*, the son of *Joseph* ; but thou art the very *Son of God* ; thou art the promised *King of Israel*.

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, thus extending the promise to his disciples, in every age and every country, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*<sup>7</sup>

That is ; ‘ Hereafter ye shall see more clear demonstrations of my divine power. For ye shall know and find, that the command of heaven is mine : so as, both I only do open it to all believers, and do thence familiarly command the ministration of angels, for the attendance of me and mine ; and, at the last, ye shall see heaven open, and me, the Son of man, coming in a glorious and wonderful manner to judgment, with all the attendance of thousand thousands of angels.’<sup>8</sup>

It is generally supposed, that our Lord is here referring to Jacob’s vision at Bethel, as recorded in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis. And, when viewed in this connexion, the patriarch’s

<sup>6</sup> Verse 49.

<sup>7</sup> Verse 50, 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Bishop Hall’s Paraphrase.*

vision may be regarded as a remarkable type of the blessings to be enjoyed under the gospel dispensation. By *heaven opening*, Jesus declares that a clear and abundant revelation of God's will shall now be made unto men; so that *heaven* itself shall, as it were, be laid *open*, and all the mysteries, relative to the salvation and glorification of man, shall be fully revealed. And by *the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man*, it is implied that there shall be a perpetual intercourse between heaven and earth, through Jesus Christ, with all the angelic host, in readiness to do Him service. 'And oh! what a glorious view does this give us of the blessings and privileges of the gospel! It is indeed *heaven opened* to earth, and *heaven opened* on earth. The church militant and the church triumphant are become one; and the whole heavenly family in both, see and adore their common Lord. Moreover, neither the world, nor the church upon earth, is to be left to the caprices of time or chance. For *the Son of man* governs, as he upholds, all. Yes; wherever his people are praying, or whatever they are doing, his gracious eye is upon them. He notes all their wants, all their weaknesses, and all their petitions. And his eye affects his heart;<sup>9</sup> so that, "in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and the angel of his presence saves

<sup>9</sup> *Adam Clarke* in loc.

them: in his love and in his pity he redeems them; and he bears them, and carries them" <sup>9</sup> all their days.

And happy, indeed, thrice happy, are they, who are led, by the Holy Spirit, to *come and see* the glorious things which are realized in the kingdom of the Messiah. Happy are they, who can say, from their own experience, that all those prejudices, which darken the understanding, pervert the judgment, and corrupt the heart, have been conquered, because they are *come* to Jesus, and because they *see*, and hear, what he has said, and done, and suffered, and what he is still doing for the full accomplishment of our redemption.

There are multitudes, alas! of whom it may be said now, as it was said of his countrymen, in the days of old, that they are "offended in him;" and that they adopt, in spirit, the language which was used by the people of Nazareth, when they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" <sup>1</sup> There are multitudes, who, when invited to *come*, and listen to the words of Him, of whom it was so emphatically said, "Never man spake like this man," <sup>2</sup> deem it sufficient to answer, with them of old, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? Search and look: for out of

<sup>9</sup> Isa. lxiii. 9.

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xiii. 55, and Mark vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 46.

Galilee," out of the poor, despised Galilee, "ariseth no prophet." <sup>3</sup> But if any one shall approach the study of the Scriptures, in faith and in prayer, manifesting a humble and teachable disposition, and a childlike simplicity of spirit; and desiring to divest himself of all those prejudices, which close the understanding and the heart against the admission of the truth, he shall hear the voice of Jesus, saying to him, *Believest thou these things? Believest thou, that I once died on the cross, to redeem thee from destruction? If so, thou shalt see greater things than these. For verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Yes, beloved, hereafter shall the believer "see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."*<sup>4</sup> And, in the mean time,

"The childlike faith, that asks not sight,  
Waits not for wonder or for sign,  
*Believes*, because it *loves* aright,  
Shall see things glorious, things divine.

'Heaven to that gaze shall open wide,  
And highest angels, to and fro,  
On messages of love shall glide  
"Twixt God above, and man below.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> John vii. 48, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxiv. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Slightly altered from *Keble's Christian Year*.

## SECTION VIII.

## CHAP. II. ver. 1—11.

## JESUS MANIFESTING FORTH HIS GLORY IN CANA OF GALILEE.

The evangelist has told us, that Jesus called upon Philip “to follow him,” as he was “going forth into Galilee.”<sup>1</sup> And, in the following passage, St. John relates what occurred, three days afterwards, in *Cana of Galilee*. It was, indeed, a remarkable manifestation of the glory of Jesus. And it plainly proves, therefore, in confirmation of what would seem to be the general scope of St. John’s gospel, that our Lord had so abundantly manifested his glory, during his public ministry, that the Jews were altogether without excuse in their obstinate incredulity.

*And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*<sup>2</sup>

It was on the third day from that on which Jesus had conversed with Nathanael, that he came

<sup>1</sup> Ch. i. 43.<sup>2</sup> John ii. 1, 2.

to this marriage-feast, where He *manifested forth his glory*.<sup>3</sup> And if we may suppose that Nathanael, though not yet called to be an apostle, was present at the feast, as one of our Lord's *disciples*, it was here that he was first permitted to witness the fulfilment of the promise given at the close of the last chapter. For here he saw, as it were, "the heaven opened," and "the Son of man" plainly exhibiting his majesty and power, as God manifest in the flesh.

Now, what was the occasion, brethren, on which Jesus and his disciples were thus present? It was on the occasion of *a marriage in Cana of Galilee*. And what should you learn, therefore, from the following narrative? First, that marriage is an honourable and sacred state. For, by gracing this marriage solemnity with his own presence, our blessed Lord has, in effect, declared that it is an estate, to which, if sought, he will never refuse his blessing.<sup>4</sup> But then, observe,

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source  
Of human offspring, sole propriety  
In Paradise, of all things common else!  
By thee adulterous lust was driven from men  
Among the bestial herds to range; by thee,  
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,  
Relations dear, and all the charities  
Of father, son, and brother, first were known.  
Far be it, that I should write thee sin or blame,

the flesh, mayest justly look for all due respect from me on all earthly occasions. But when it comes to divine matters, the businesses of my heavenly Father, it is not for thee to interpose thyself. The will of God is known to me. And the times are in his most wise and eternal counsel set, when my miraculous works shall be done. It is not, at this moment, seasonable to do that which thou requirest; but when I see the exact season for this act, I will accordingly effect it.' <sup>9</sup>

Our Saviour's words, taken, as they ought to be, in connexion with the whole narrative, would certainly seem to admit of the above interpretation. And that such was the construction put upon them by Mary herself may be gathered from her own words. For she immediately said unto the servants, *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*. At the same time, there would seem to be a peculiar emphasis in the phrase, *Mine hour*

<sup>9</sup> I also subjoin the following passage from *Bishop Hall's Contemplations*. 'Mary solicited Christ as a mother; He answers her as a woman. If she were the mother of his flesh, yet his Deity was eternal. She might not so remember herself to be a mother, that she should forget she was a woman; nor so look upon him as a son, that she should not regard him as a God. He was so obedient to her as a mother, that withal she must obey Him as her God. \* \* \* Matter of miracle concerned the Godhead only; supernatural things were above the sphere of fleshly relation.'

*is not yet come.*<sup>1</sup> And we may be permitted to conjecture, therefore, that our Lord intended, indirectly at least, to warn Mary that the hour would come when his glory would be fully manifested; but that she must wait in patience until the appointed time should so arrive.

*And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece; Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*<sup>2</sup>

Now, observe, brethren, the care which our Lord took so to order all the circumstances of the miracle, that there could remain no doubt concerning the reality of the change.

This care appears, first, in the persons chosen to assist in it. For though, in the exercise of that Almighty power which, year by year, in the production of the juice of the grape, turns water into wine, Jesus could need no helper; and though he could, in a moment of time, have created wine out of nothing, and filled the empty vessels with a word of his mouth; yet was he pleased to use the ministry of others, the servants of the house, and such as could not possibly be charged with any collusion or confede-

<sup>1</sup> See chap. vii. 6, 8, and viii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 6—8.



racy with himself. These servants poured in the water with their own hands. And here, therefore, were so many unexceptionable witnesses to prove that what they themselves knew to be common water, was, immediately afterwards, by their own hands, drawn out wine.

The same care appears, secondly, in the vessels singled out for that purpose: *There were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.* This is a remark of great importance. For as the Jews were particular, even to superstition, with regard to their ceremonial purifications, they took care to provide themselves with large vessels for the purpose. And, as these vessels were designed for a holy use, it was reckoned a heinous profanation to put anything but water in them. So that, in the case before us, there was no room whatever for suspecting that these water-pots could have been previously filled with wine.

Such was the care which our Lord took so to order all the circumstances of the miracle, that it should not be open to any cavil or exception. And now mark the calm and simple manner in which our Lord gave his command to the servants: *Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.* He does not approach the water-pots himself. He does not even require that the

wine should first be brought to him, that he might ascertain the reality of the change. But with a dignity becoming Him, who had simply willed it and it was done, he immediately bids the servants *bear* it at once to the governor of the feast; *and they bare it.*

*When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*<sup>3</sup>

Since it is here said, of *the ruler of the feast*, that *he knew not whence it was*, it is plain that his declaration to the bridegroom respecting the goodness of the wine, could not have been occasioned by favour or affection toward Jesus, or by any collusion with him; but that it must have been simply uttered under a conviction of the reality of the fact. And when it is added, respecting *the servants which drew the water*, that *they knew*, it is plainly implied that they knew it was water only with which the vessels had been filled; but that they had kept silence, respecting the miraculous change which had taken place, until they should hear from *the ruler of the feast*

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 9, 10.

what he thought of the wine which they had been commanded to bear to him. The ignorance of the ruler of the feast proves the goodness of the wine : and the knowledge of the servants proves the reality of the miracle.\*

Now follows the observation of the evangelist, on the narrative before us :

*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory ; and his disciples believed on him.*<sup>5</sup>

In order that you may enter fully into the phrase of *manifesting forth his glory*, you must consider the peculiar import of the term among the Jews. By the word *glory*, they were accustomed to denote the visible marks of God's special presence and residence among them, in the tabernacle, first, and, afterwards, in the temple. Hence their ark was called "the ark of the testimony," and the "dwelling," or "tabernacle," of God. And when that ark fell into the enemy's hand, the child which was born immediately afterwards was named "Ichabod," or "where is the glory?" to denote that the glory was departed from Israel, because "the ark of God was taken."<sup>6</sup> Hence David, begging to be restored to the services of the sanctuary, expresses that happiness by "seeing God's glory."<sup>7</sup> And St.

\* *Bengelius* in loc.

<sup>5</sup> Ver. 11.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Sam. iv. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 2.

Paul says, that “over the ark of the covenant were the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.”<sup>8</sup> But the same apostle calls all these things a figure and a shadow of Christ. And, accordingly, we have seen how our evangelist has described the incarnation of the Eternal Word, by saying that he “dwelt,” or tabernacled “among us;”<sup>9</sup> his human body veiling the glory of the Godhead; even as the veil in the temple separated the visible tokens of God’s presence from common sight. To show, still more plainly, that the same God was now exhibiting himself in this fleshly tabernacle, who had formerly exhibited himself to the Jews in their temple, St. John emphatically added, in the above passage, “We have seen his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.”<sup>1</sup> And therefore when he now speaks of Jesus, as *manifesting forth his glory*, he gives us to understand that he did something, which plainly proved his power to be divine, and which argued the actual presence of the Godhead, with, and in, his human body.

And, assuredly, brethren, *this miracle in Cana of Galilee manifested forth the glory* of the Messiah, both as God, and as our Mediator. Jesus thus manifested forth his divine glory. For he did not, like any of the prophets before him, invoke the name of God, or say that he performed

<sup>8</sup> Heb. ix. 4, 5.<sup>9</sup> John i. 14.<sup>1</sup> John i. 14.

it by God's command. But, by his own will, our Lord produced, at a word, this marvellous change; and thus exhibited the same divine power, which produces the juice of the grape in the vine, by sending rain from heaven. And at the same time, Jesus manifested forth his mediatorial glory. For he thus declared his readiness, not only to administer to all our wants, but also to encompass us with mercy and with love on every side!

Yes, beloved, it was not only an act of benevolence in itself, but it emphatically shadowed forth other and far greater mercies. And it is worthy of remark, that, while Moses opened his commission to the Egyptians by changing water into blood, Jesus Christ began his gracious ministry by turning water into wine. Should we not, therefore, entreat our merciful Saviour, that he would be graciously pleased to repeat this miracle over again in each of our hearts; nothing doubting but that he, who at length granted the request of his mother, will, in like manner, suffer himself to be vanquished by our importunities. Let us remember, also, for our encouragement, how truly it may be said of our Lord, and of the blessings of his covenant, that he keeps the best till last. Those whom the world feasts, have their best wine first. And, as years roll on, every worldly enjoyment appears more and more

vapid, dull, and unsatisfactory. But it is not so with the disciples of Jesus. For they, whom Jesus entertains at his marriage supper, have many present comforts, which continually minister fresh occasions for gratitude and love. And yet they rejoice to know, that their best wine is kept till last, and that they shall drink it for ever new in the kingdom of their Father. Such, beloved, is

——— ‘The feast of heavenly love,  
Spread, at the Saviour’s word,  
For souls that hear his call, and prove  
Meet for his bridal board.’

Yea,

‘Such is thy banquet, dearest Lord;  
O give us grace to cast  
Our lot with thine, to trust thy word,  
And KEEP OUR BEST TILL LAST.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Keble’s Christian Year.*

## SECTION IX.

CHAP. II. ver. 12—25.

JESUS VINDICATING THE HONOUR OF HIS FATHER'S  
HOUSE, AND PERFORMING MIRACLES AT THE PASS-  
OVER.

The evangelist follows up the narrative of what took place at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, by stating that,

*After this, Jesus went down to Capernaum, he and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.*<sup>1</sup>

Mention is here made of our Lord's *brethren*. But Bishop Pearson justly remarks, that though his *mother* and his *brethren* are named together, yet they are never called the sons of his mother. 'It is possible,' he says, 'that Joseph might have had children before Mary was espoused to him. And then, as he was reported and called our Saviour's father, so might they well be accounted and called his *brethren*, as the ancient fathers, especially of the Greek church, have taught. Not that it is necessary, however, thus to assert that

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 12.

Joseph had any offspring. Because the language of the Jews includeth, in the name of *brethren*, not only the strict relation of fraternity, but also the larger consanguinity. And, therefore, it is sufficient satisfaction for that expression, that there were such persons allied unto the blessed Virgin.

We know that, after John the Baptist was imprisoned, "Jesus went and dwelt at Capernaum."<sup>2</sup> But, on the present occasion, he remained there only a few days. For, as the evangelist proceeds to relate,

*The Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandize. And his disciples remembered that it was written,<sup>3</sup> The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.<sup>4</sup>*

This is the first passover at which our Saviour was present after he entered on his public ministry. Every male among the Jews was

<sup>2</sup> See Matt. iv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxix. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 13—17.



required to appear at this feast; and our Lord, in obedience to the law, went up to Jerusalem to observe it. The transaction here recorded is similar to that which St. Matthew has related in the latter part of his gospel.<sup>5</sup> It appears, therefore, that the vindication of *his Father's house* from profanation was, as it were, the first and the last care of our blessed Lord, since we find that he, in a manner, began and finished his public ministry by this significant act. 'Of all Christ's wonderful works,' says the holy Jerome, 'this appears to me the most wonderful.' And surely, brethren, when you consider the manner in which our Lord performed this remarkable act of authority; when you consider the spot on which the transaction took place; and when you consider that pride, avarice, resentment, and every evil passion, would have disposed the sellers to resist him, you will feel that it must, indeed, have been a divine power, which at once overawed and overpowered them. Here you behold Jesus, who, at that early period of his ministry, was but little known, appearing in the temple without human authority, without attendants, and without any weapon except a scourge made of the small cords used in confining cattle; and yet driving all the buyers and sellers before him; overturning, at the same time, the tables of those

<sup>5</sup> See Matt. xxi. 12, 13.

who exchanged foreign for current coin; and clearing the precincts of the temple of everything connected with this unholy traffic. And all this, without any tumult or any opposition whatever; though in the very midst of the temple, and in the sight of those very priests, who had countenanced all this merchandize, and who had, probably, made it a source of profit to themselves. But not even the sacredness of the temple, nor the awful ceremonials of religion, nor the manner in which our Lord had now vindicated the honour of his Father's house, could deter the priests from still encouraging this shameful traffic. For though Jesus thus purified the temple at the commencement of his public ministry, yet, after the space of three years, it was necessary that the same act should be repeated. So powerful, alas! is this grovelling passion, the love of gain. And so deep is that depravity, which fears not God, and which regards not his sabbaths, his sanctuary, or his law!

When the disciples witnessed the manner in which our Lord vindicated the courts of his Father's house from so gross a profanation, and when they contrasted this deportment with the general meekness and gentleness of his character, they recollected a passage in the sixty-ninth Psalm, in which David, speaking as a type of the Messiah, had said, *The zeal of thine house*

*hath eaten me up* : meaning, that he was inwardly consumed by an earnest desire to purify God's sacred ordinances, and his holy habitation, from every corruption. And they readily perceived how applicable the passage was to the conduct of Jesus on this occasion. And may we not say, brethren, that here is an example set for all Christians, but more especially for the pastors of Christ's flock ? In every minister of the Gospel, *zeal for God's house*, by which is to be understood an intense solicitude that divine worship may be pure, and such as God will approve, should be, as it were, the one great absorbing affection and desire of his mind. In Jesus Christ, it was the great commanding feature of his public ministry : for with *zeal for his Father's house*, he began and ended that ministry. And with the same holy zeal, the ministers of Christ should begin and end the labours of their sacred calling. Yes, the christian pastor should always remember that, as a pastor, he lives for others, and works for others, from morning till night. It is certain, therefore, that a small measure of zeal will not suffice for the discharge of his arduous duties ; but that he needs an ardent and a devouring zeal—a zeal, however, regulated by the wisdom of God, and conducted by his Spirit.

*Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou*

*doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple,<sup>6</sup> and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.<sup>7</sup>*

It is worthy of remark that here, as on other occasions, our Lord answers those incredulous

<sup>6</sup> ‘ Well saith Ambrose, of our Lord’s body : “ Vere Templum, in quo nostrorum est purificatio peccatorum.” Truly a Temple, He; no Temple ever so truly; since therein was offered up the true propitiation for, and the true purification of, our sins, and of us from them. This is the end of all temples, that ever were or shall be; an end only foreshadowed in all besides, but in this truly accomplished. For there, was the only true holocaust of his entire obedience, which burnt in him bright and clear, from the first to the last, all his life long. There, was the only true trespass offering of his death and passion, satisfactory to the full, for all the trespasses and transgressions of the whole world. There, was the meat and drink offering of his blessed body and most precious blood. And there, were the entrails of this sacrifice; even the love wherewith he performed it. Yes, the desire, the longing desire, which He had for its performance; this, this was the perfect offering, that set at one all things both in heaven and earth.’—*Bishop Andrews, Sermon on John ii. 19.*

<sup>7</sup> Ver. 18—22.

Jews, who were continually asking for a *sign*, by referring them to his Resurrection.<sup>8</sup> It is true, that our Lord employs the language of metaphor; but it was a metaphor not unfrequently used by the Jews themselves. In this, however, as in other instances, they were obstinately bent upon misinterpreting his language.<sup>1</sup> And he left them, therefore, to their own delusions; so that "seeing, they saw not; and hearing, they heard not, neither did they understand."<sup>2</sup> The real scope of our Saviour's answer may be thus expressed: 'You are now profaners of the temple of God. You have also despised my authority, and have been unmoved by the things which I have already done. But your wickedness will not end here. You will oppose me more and more, until you destroy the real temple of God, of which this is the type, by nailing me to the cross. But in three days I will raise it up, to be my dwelling-place for eternity.'

Now consider, on the one hand, brethren, how admirably this *sign* was suited to demonstrate that Jesus was the true Messiah. For not only was this Resurrection of which he spake, the ful-

<sup>8</sup> See Matt. xii. 39, 40; and xvi. 1—4.

<sup>1</sup> And this perverted interpretation of our Lord's language was all they could adduce, as evidence against him, at his trial. See Matt. xxvi. 61; xxvii. 40; and Mark xiv. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 13.

filment of all the types and all the prophecies, but it was the crowning act of the great work of redemption. For on this was the salvation of the world to rest; viz. that *the temple* of Christ's body was to be *destroyed*, as a propitiation for our sins, and that it was to be *raised up again*, for our justification. Consider, on the other hand, how well the mention of it was adapted to the circumstances in which our Lord was now placed. For the Jews, who were dreaming of an earthly monarchy, would now have been taught, had they been willing to learn, that the glory of the Messiah was not to be fully revealed until after his death. Thus might the disciples of Jesus have been prepared, from the very beginning, against the offence of the cross. And thus might the unbelieving Jews have been forewarned that, with all their enmity and all their evil designs, they were only about to accomplish the determinate purpose and counsel of God.<sup>3</sup>

And, indeed, we learn, from the passage before us, that though the disciples themselves did not, at the time, enter into the scope of our Lord's answer, yet his words served, afterwards, to strengthen and confirm their faith. For *when he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

<sup>3</sup> See Acts ii. 23.

It appears, therefore, that the disciples treasured up these words in their memory. And, afterwards, when the event had illustrated their true meaning, they more fully *believed the Scripture*, as well as *the word which Jesus had said*. They *believed the word which Jesus had said*, when they called to mind how distinctly he had foretold his own death and resurrection. And *they believed the Scripture*, when they saw how exactly all things had been fully accomplished, which were “written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

And, from the above remark of the evangelist, some have taken occasion to observe how important it is that children should learn, from their earliest years, the truths of the sacred Scriptures. The words which are treasured up in their memory may not, indeed, at first be understood; but, afterwards, the important truths which they contain may become clear to them. And, therefore, all who are engaged in the work of christian instruction, should take comfort from the thought, that the instruction which they are imparting, how imperfectly soever it may be received or comprehended at present, may be thoroughly understood at a future period; and that it may thus be affording daily and hourly

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiv. 44.

comfort, when the tongue of the instructor has long been silent in the grave. Be not discouraged, then, christian parents, even though you may not be permitted to witness any immediate fruit of your labours. But go on, in faith and in prayer, earnestly commending the issue to Him, who only can give the increase. And how consolatory is the thought, that, notwithstanding all the perverseness, ignorance, and inattention, which you may now have to deplore, the truths which you are labouring to inculcate upon your children, may hereafter penetrate their hearts, and that, though they refuse to accompany you in your pilgrimage on earth, they may afterwards, in answer to your prayers, *believe the Scriptures and the word which Jesus has said*, and be disposed and enabled to follow you to the kingdom of glory.

It appears, from the sequel of this chapter, and from the first twenty-one verses of the third chapter, that, although the first entrance of our Lord into his own temple did not produce any salutary effect upon those who there witnessed his vindication of his Father's honour, yet he continued to manifest his glory at Jerusalem during the continuance of the passover. And with such power, indeed, was this glory manifested, that not only many of the people, but one



of the Pharisees<sup>5</sup> also, approached him with a profession of belief. The evangelist does not particularise any of the miracles which were performed; but, in the three remaining verses of the chapter, he describes, generally, the effect which they produced among the people.

*Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, or rather, during the feast,*<sup>6</sup> comprising the whole eight days of the solemnity, *many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*<sup>7</sup>

When the evangelist says that *many believed in his name*, we may fairly conjecture that some of the persons so described, manifested, like Nicodemus, an earnest desire to inquire into the things which concerned their everlasting peace. But it is evident, from the two concluding verses, that the majority of them contented themselves with a mere outward acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, unaccompanied by any real desire to do, what belief implies, viz. to commit themselves altogether to him, and to his guidance.

<sup>5</sup> See chap. iii. 1—21.

<sup>6</sup> ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ.

Ver. 23—25.

This import of the term *belief*, when used in its most extensive signification, is plainly declared in the twenty-fourth verse, where the evangelist repeats, in the original, the very same word<sup>8</sup> which he had employed in the sentence immediately preceding. And our translators have well expressed its force, in this connexion, by saying that *Jesus did not commit himself, or trust himself*, with them. We are told, at the same time, that Jesus would not commit thus himself unto them, *because he knew all men*. And he knew, therefore, that the greater part of them were persons who were merely carried away, for a time, by a blind impulse; and that some of them would only have injured the cause by their timidity, while others would easily have been stirred up to sedition and tumult. So that, in the passage before us, we have joint evidence of the divinity and of the humanity of Jesus Christ. As man, he *would not trust himself* to those who now professed to *believe in his name*; because, as God, he himself knew what was in their hearts. Yea, says the evangelist, *he needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man*.

<sup>8</sup> ἐπίστευεν.

## SECTION X.

## CHAP. III. ver. 1—12.

THE FIRST PART OF OUR LORD'S CONVERSATION WITH  
NICODEMUS.

The evangelist, having, at the conclusion of the second chapter, stated generally, that "many believed" in the name of Jesus, "when they saw the miracles which he did," now relates the particular case of Nicodemus, whose visit to our Lord, together with the conversation which ensued, will form the subject of this and the following section.

*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? <sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Verse 1—4.

The Jews employed the expression of *being born again*, to denote a change from the state of a heathen, to that of a Jew. But they never used it as applicable to a Jew, because they supposed that, by his birth, he was entitled to all the privileges of the people of God. When, therefore, our Saviour applied the expression to a Jew, in common with every other man, Nicodemus supposed that there must be something in its scope and signification passing his comprehension. *How*, then, he asks, *can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;<sup>2</sup> so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto*

<sup>2</sup> 'As if our Lord had said, Canst thou command its free and blessed breezes to visit the Jews alone? No; it *bloweth where it listeth*. And thou knowest not *whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*. But thou hearest the sound thereof; that sound, which is going forth into all lands, and as far as the ends of the earth.'—*Bishop Heber.*

*him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*<sup>3</sup>

Viewing the language of the last verse, as forming the connecting link between this and the following passage, we may understand our Lord to say; *If I have told you* of those fundamental truths, which constitute the first principles of the Gospel, to be received by sinners upon earth, *and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* how shall ye believe, if I proceed to tell you of the more inscrutable things pertaining to the redemption of man? how shall ye believe if I proceed to tell you of those profound wonders of God's government, which will be the study and the theme of the saints in heaven, through the ages of eternity?

My brethren; In strict conformity with the judgment of the early church, the passage before us was regarded by the compilers of our Liturgy, as applicable to Baptism.<sup>4</sup> And, accordingly, the

<sup>3</sup> Verse 5—12.

<sup>4</sup> I should also mention that the above passage has been

Office of Baptism opens with reminding those who come to the baptismal font, that ‘all men are conceived and born in sin; and that our Saviour Christ saith, None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost.’ And they are therefore called upon to pray, that the child may be ‘baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ’s holy church, and be made a lively member of the same.’<sup>5</sup> For regeneration was rightly viewed, by the Fathers of our church, as denoting an entrance upon a new state; an initiation into the christian covenant. They identified it, therefore, with the initiatory sacrament of Baptism,

introduced by our Church, not only into the office for adult Baptism, but also into the service for Trinity Sunday. In the third chapter of the Gospel by St. Matthew, which forms the second morning lesson for that Festival, the third person of the blessed Trinity is described, as alighting upon Jesus at his baptism in the river Jordan, whose water was sanctified to the mystical washing of sin. And in this passage from the Gospel by St. John, which forms the Gospel for that day, we are reminded how beautifully our Lord has illustrated the office of the Holy Ghost, in relation to that sacrament of Baptism which He has instituted for his church, by solemnly declaring that, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants.*

as the divinely appointed means of admission into that covenant, and of a participation in its privileges. Accordingly, with the Church of England, as with the primitive church, Baptism and Regeneration are synonymous and convertible terms.<sup>6</sup> The infants who are brought to the baptismal font, are introduced to a new and glorious order of things, being brought out of a state of wrath, into a state of grace and salvation. And our church considers this important change, taking place in Baptism, to be justly entitled to the appellation of a 'new birth,' and a 'spiritual regeneration.' For, to speak in the language of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, 'now we begin to be reckoned in a new account; God is become our Father, Christ our elder brother, the Spirit the earnest of our inheritance, the Church our mother; our food is the body and blood of our Lord, faith is our learning, religion our employment, our whole life is spiritual, and heaven is the object of our hopes, and the mighty prize our high calling.'

I have said that, in this use of the term, our Church treads in the steps of the primitive

<sup>6</sup> See the last sentence in the *ninth Article of our Church*; as worded, respectively, in the Latin and English versions. The word *renati*, in the Latin article, is expressed, in the English article, by the word *baptized*, as by an equivalent and corresponding term.

Christians. And I may add, that such interpretation evidently derives support from the scope of our Lord's language in this conversation with Nicodemus. For, after having pointed out the necessity of being *born again*, our Lord reproves this *master of Israel*, for not already *knowing these things*: that is, for not readily perceiving the force and propriety of a figure of speech, which ought to have been familiar to a Jewish teacher. And that this reproof was justly merited, we collect from the best writers on Jewish antiquities. For it appears, that terms of similar import were in frequent use among the Jews, to describe those Gentiles, who had been converted from heathenism, and admitted by Baptism into the Jewish church. Such proselytes were considered as dead to their former state of darkness, and as born anew to light, liberty, and privileges, among the children of Israel, and within the Church of God. The figure was easy, natural, and affecting. And therefore our Lord was pleased, in this conference with Nicodemus, to adopt the same kind of language; applying it to the case of admitting converts, by baptism, both from Judaism and Paganism, into Christianity; and thus transferring and sanctifying the rite, the figure, and the name, to higher and holier, but still similar, purposes.

St. Paul's use of the term, Regeneration, in



his Epistle to Titus,<sup>7</sup> fully confirms the above interpretation of our Lord's language to Nicodemus. And it is, therefore, in strict accordance both with the language of scripture, and the usage of the early christian church, that, in our Church Catechism, the 'inward and spiritual grace' of baptism is defined to be 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.'<sup>8</sup> The allusion, in the former clause, is to that passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in which the apostle speaks of our being planted together in the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>9</sup> And the latter clause is evidently intended to illustrate and explain the figurative expression contained in the former. The 'inward and spiritual grace' of Baptism, is declared to be 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.' And this is explained, as denoting a transition from a state of 'nature,' to a state of 'grace;' a transition from wrath to favour; for 'being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Tit. iii. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Church Catechism.*

<sup>9</sup> Rom. vi. 1—5.

<sup>1</sup> 'Since faith on our part is the correlative to grace on God's part, good works are our acts of faith, and sacraments

Such, brethren, is the high and elevated character of the sacrament of Baptism. And therefore, if so many are found, in every christian country, who think so lightly, and speak so irreverently, of the office of Baptism, is it not because there are so many professed Christians, who think so little of the danger to which they are exposed, and of the need which they have of the everlasting covenant, to redeem them from death, and to give them admittance into the kingdom of God? To all such, we may well appeal, in the language of the twelfth verse, and say, *If we have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if we tell you of heavenly things?* This ordinance speaks to you, plainly and intelligibly, of the deep depravity of our fallen nature, and of our absolute need of redeeming blood, and sanctifying grace. For, to borrow the language of the twenty-seventh Article; ‘It is a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly, are grafted into the church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed

are God’s acts of grace. So that, whether we say we are justified by faith, or by works, or by sacraments, all these but mean this one doctrine; viz. that we are justified by grace, given through sacraments, impetrated by faith, manifested in works.’—*Newman on Justification.*

and sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.' But if by multitudes of parents, all this shall be regarded as a dead letter; and if the children of such parents shall, in consequence, be brought up in utter ignorance of baptismal privileges and baptismal duties, can we wonder that Baptism should be neglected and despised; or can we be surprised that the hearts and minds of thousands and tens of thousands, should never be raised up to the high and *heavenly things* of God's glory; his electing love; and the blessedness laid up "for them that love him?"<sup>2</sup>

Oh! beloved, if our lives were, in any degree, answerable to the standard placed before us in the sacrament of Baptism, we should cease to hear of any objections to the truly scriptural language of our baptismal office. And I would therefore employ a few words of earnest exhortation, and say to you: As you value the *health* of your own souls, and of the souls of all committed to your charge, bring not this holy sacrament down to the level of your own imperfect views and apprehensions; but endeavour, rather, to raise up your minds to the lofty standard *there* set before you! View this sacrament of holy Baptism, as being 'generally,' and in the ordinary course of God's proceedings, 'necessary to

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 9.

salvation.’<sup>3</sup> And ponder, in your hearts, the admirable language of Hooker, who says, ‘Howsoever Almighty God, by the secret methods of his own incomprehensible mercy, may be thought to save without Baptism; and how certain soever it may be that the importance of this holy sacrament should yet be no prejudice to their salvation, that want it by some inevitable necessity, and without any fault of their own; still this cleareth not the Church from guiltiness of blood, if, through her superfluous scrupulosity, lets and impediments of less regard should cause a grace of so great moment to be withheld, wherein our merciless strictness may be our own harm, though not theirs towards whom we show it; and we, for the hardness of our hearts, may perish, albeit they, through God’s unspeakable mercy, do live!’ Surely, if you lay these things to heart, and if you consider the unspeakable goodness of God, in thus providing an instrument of grace and salvation for those who are ‘by nature children of wrath,’ you will never undervalue the sacrament of Baptism. And, believe me, brethren, the more you enter into the spirit of this divine ordinance, the more you will understand how inseparably baptismal privileges,

<sup>3</sup> *Church Catechism.* ‘It is true,’ says Calvin, ‘that we are *driven from salvation* by the neglect of Baptism. And I do confess that in this sense it is *necessary*.’

and baptismal duties, are joined together. The more you enter into the spirit of this ordinance, the more you will feel how impossible it is that you should despise the one, and yet pretend to perform the other. For you will feel that the promises of the Gospel covenant, 'visibly signed and sealed,'<sup>4</sup> in Baptism, are the very root, from which all the duties of life derive their sap and nutriment.

What, then, are the privileges which believers enjoy, as having been admitted, by Baptism, into the church of God? Having been then admitted into the fold of Christ, they have been brought up under the care of a kind Shepherd, who has led them forth into "green pastures" and "beside the still waters."<sup>5</sup> Having been then grafted into the true vine, they have been pruned and sheltered, and watered by the heavenly Husbandman; and, like a "tree planted by the rivers of water," have brought "forth fruit in their season."<sup>6</sup> Having been then incorporated into the mystical body of Christ's church, they have received wisdom, and strength, and direction, and support, for every undertaking, from the living "Head," and have "grown up into him in all things."<sup>7</sup> Having been then adopted into the family of heaven, they have received grace to

<sup>4</sup> Art. xxvii.<sup>5</sup> Psal. xxiii. 2.<sup>6</sup> Psal. i. 3.<sup>7</sup> Eph. iv. 15.

“ walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called,”<sup>8</sup> and to “ adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.”<sup>9</sup> Having then been made “ heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,”<sup>1</sup> they have been enabled to read their title to an inheritance that is “ incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”<sup>2</sup> And, to sum up all; by virtue of their ‘ new birth unto righteousness,’ they have been entitled to draw near, daily and hourly, to the Author of their ‘ new being,’ as to a loving, reconciled Father, and to ask for fresh supplies of his renewing grace.

Such are the blessings which the true believer is permitted to derive from having been introduced, by Baptism, into the pale of Christ’s church, and from having been made a partaker of all those promises of the covenant of grace, which are visibly signed and sealed in that holy sacrament. All things are his, for “ he is Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.”<sup>3</sup> And when he thinks of his own vileness and of the freeness and fulness of divine grace, he sets his seal to the truth of our Lord’s declaration, that as *the wind bloweth where it listeth, and he hears the sound thereof, but cannot not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

But, observe, brethren, all these privileges are

<sup>8</sup> Eph. iv. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Tit. ii. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 23.

limited to true believers. For though our blessed Lord says, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, yet he does not say that every one who is so born shall inherit eternal life. 'It is true,' says Bishop Beveridge, 'that all who are baptized, or *born of water and of the Spirit*, are thereby admitted into the church, or the kingdom of God upon earth. But, except they submit to the government, and obey the laws established in it, they forfeit all their right and title to the kingdom of heaven. Baptism, indeed, puts us into the way to heaven, but unless we walk in that way, we can never come thither.'

It is certain, then, that we cannot well think too highly of this holy sacrament of Baptism, in which the seed of divine grace is sown in our hearts, sufficient to enable us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, to overcome temptation, to believe aright in God our Saviour, and to obey and serve him faithfully all the days of our life. But what will baptism avail us, unless we shall give all diligence, so that the seed may not perish for want of cultivation? We must commend it, therefore, to the care of the great Husbandman of the vineyard, and diligently employ all those means of grace, which he has instituted for its growth within our hearts. Yea, we must cherish and cultivate this heavenly seed, by

withful, persevering prayer, both in public and in private, and, more especially, by a frequent participation of those holy mysteries, which are so admirably suited to strengthen and support us in the performance of our baptismal vows. For if, at Baptism, we enlisted under the banner of our Saviour Christ, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, at the table of the Lord, our souls are strengthened and refreshed for the conflict which awaits us. And if, at Baptism, we were admitted into the family of God, at the table of the Lord, we draw near, as dear children, in the spirit of adoption, to partake of the banquet of that most heavenly food, which our Father has there provided for us. Let this be the spirit, in which we come to partake of the holy communion; and, as we look around upon our fellow-worshippers, our hearts will accompany our lips, as we sing,

‘ My God, and is thy table spread,  
And doth thy cup with love o’erflow?  
Thither be all thy children led,  
And let them all thy sweetness know.

\* \* \* \*

O let thy table honour’d be  
And furnish’d well with joyful guests;  
And may each soul salvation see,  
That here its sacred pledges tastes!’

*Hymn for the Holy Communion.*



Extract from *Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity*, book v. sect. 53.

'THE GROUNDS IN SCRIPTURE, WHEREUPON A NECESSITY OF OUTWARD BAPTISM HATH BEEN BUILT.'

'There are some who deny that a necessity of outward Baptism can be grounded upon the words of our Saviour Christ: *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* For by *water and the Spirit*, we are to understand, as they imagine, no more than if *the Spirit* alone had been mentioned, and *water* not spoken of. Which they think is plain, because elsewhere it is not IMPROBABLE that "the Holy Ghost and fire" (Matt. iii. 11. do but signify the Holy Ghost in operation resembling fire. Whereupon they conclude, that seeing fire, in one place. MAY BE, therefore *water*, in another place, is but a metaphor, and *Spirit* the interpretation thereof; so that the words do only mean, That *except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* I hold it for a most infallible rule, in expositions of sacred scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changeth the meaning of words, as alchymy doth or would do the substance of metals, making of anything what it listeth, and bringing in the end all truth to nothing. Or, howsoever such voluntary exercise of wit might be borne with otherwise; yet in places which usually serve, as this doth, to be alleged for grounds and principles, less is permitted. To hide the general consent of antiquity, agreeing in the literal interpretation, they cunningly affirm, that CERTAIN have taken these words as meant of material *water*, when they know that, of all the ancients, there is NOT ONE to be named, that ever did

OTHERWISE either expound or allege the phrase, than as implying EXTERNAL BAPTISM. Shall that, which hath always received this and no other construction, be now disguised with the toy of novelty? Must we needs, at the mere show of a critical conceit, without any more deliberation, utterly condemn them of error, which will not admit that “fire,” in the words of John, is quenched with the name of “the Holy Ghost;” or, with the name of *the Spirit*, *water* dried up, in the words of Christ? When the letter of the law hath two things plainly and expressly specified, *water* and *the Spirit*; *water*, as a duty required on our parts, *the Spirit*, as a gift which God bestoweth; there is danger in presuming so to interpret it, as if the clause which concerneth ourselves, were more than needeth. We may, by such rare expositions, attain perhaps in the end to be thought witty, but with ill advice. Finally, if, at the time when that Baptism, which was meant by John, came to be really and truly performed by Christ Himself, we find the apostles, that had been, as we are, before baptized, new baptized with “the Holy Ghost,” and, in this their later Baptism, as well a visible descent of “fire,” as a secret miraculous infusion of the Spirit: if on us He accomplish likewise the heavenly work of our new birth, not with *the Spirit* alone, but with *water* thereunto adjoined; sith the faith-fullest expounders of his words are his own deeds, let that which his hand hath manifestly wrought, declare what his speech did doubtfully utter.’

## SECTION XI.

CHAP. III. ver. 13—21.

THE SECOND PART OF OUR LORD'S CONVERSATION  
WITH NICODEMUS.

This latter part of our Lord's discourse conveys to Nicodemus that instruction respecting "heavenly things," which, after the word of reproof contained in the former part, he was the better prepared to receive, and which will be profitable to every humble and teachable Christian to the end of time. That such was the spirit, which Nicodemus himself now manifested, we may plainly infer from considering, with reference to the language of the twelfth verse, how vain it would have been for our Lord to have entered on the explanation of these "heavenly" mysteries, unless this pharisee's eyes had been enlightened to perceive the things which concerned his everlasting peace. We may believe, therefore, that it was with Nicodemus, as with Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of

Paul ;”<sup>1</sup> and that our Lord, knowing the secrets of his heart, seized this occasion for giving him such divine instruction. In the preceding part of the discourse, he had convinced Nicodemus of “ sin ;” and now, therefore, he proceeds to convince him of “ righteousness” and “ judgment.”<sup>2</sup>

*And no man, continues Jesus, hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.*<sup>3</sup>

That is ; ‘ The things, to which I have been referring, as “ heavenly things ;” viz. the greatest mysteries of salvation, and the high and incomprehensible matters of another world ; these are “ things,” whereof no man can tell thee, but he that hath been in heaven. And no man hath been there to see them, but he, that is now come down from heaven ; even that Son of man, that talketh with thee, and who, in respect of his Deity, is still in heaven.’<sup>4</sup>

Having thus described the glory of the person

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> See John xvi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 13. ‘ Jesus calls himself *the Son of man*, that we may not doubt, but that we, who believe, shall enter into heaven, as well as he. For he took upon him our flesh for this cause, that he might make us partakers of all good things.’—*Calvin.*

<sup>4</sup> *Bishop Hall’s Paraphrase.*

of the Redeemer, our Lord describes, in the next place, the work of redemption.

*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*<sup>5</sup>

The history of the *serpent*, which *Moses lifted up*, is recorded in the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers. It was lifted up *in the wilderness*, where there was no other medicine for the wretched sufferers. And as that serpent of brass was a serpent without poison, to counteract the deadly bites of the poisonous serpents; even so the man Christ Jesus, though in "the likeness of sinful flesh,"<sup>6</sup> was a man without spot of sin, to overcome that old serpent, who "had the power of death," and thus to "deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."<sup>7</sup>

Now, upon looking to the history of the brazen serpent, in the Book of Numbers, you will find it written, that "if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."<sup>8</sup> The cure could not be effected in any of the diseased, except such as felt themselves to be bitten by the serpents; nor in them, unless they

<sup>5</sup> Verse 14, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. viii. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. ii. 14, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Numb. xxi. 9.

looked, with a believing dependence on God, at the brazen serpent erected on a pole. And how does our Lord teach us to apply this history to ourselves? *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Yes, beloved, as the wounded Israelites “beheld the serpent of brass” for their cure, so must we, feeling our lost and wretched condition by sin, look, with the eye of the soul, to the cross of Christ, and there view him, redeeming us from the curse, and from all the miseries of sin. And if, in the temporal case, healing followed, so will it do in the spiritual; for *whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Moreover, by the term, *life*, we are here to understand, not only an eternal existence in heaven, but also that happy change of state, which, even while we remain in this world, invariably accompanies a sound conversion of the heart. It signifies all that new vigour and energy of soul; all those new principles, new tastes, and new affections, of which a fallen creature becomes a partaker, when he believes in his Saviour, and receives him in all his offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King. By believing in Jesus, the pardoned sinner passes, even now, from death to life. He becomes “a new creature: old things are passed

away; behold, all things are become new.”<sup>9</sup> He is brought to a new view of God, as his Father; and he walks before him in humble reverence, and yet in spiritual dignity; serving Him as a son, with love, not as a slave, with terror. Heavenly things become his delight; the love of the world, that great idol, is subdued; and he learns, also, to forgive all, to love all, and to have patience with all. Thus it is, *that whosoever believeth in Jesus, does not perish*, but, according to the exact force of the word which the evangelist employs, *HAS, even now, eternal life*. In this world it commences with many a blessed earnest of the Spirit; and the everlasting fulness of it shall be hereafter.

But what is it, you will ask, thus to *believe* in Jesus? My beloved brethren, if you had been in the camp of Israel, would you not have known what was meant by looking at the serpent? You would not have thought it sufficient, to have formed some notions only of the object placed on the pole: but, if you had been bitten, and felt yourself perishing, you would have desired to look to the serpent of brass for your own cure. And, in like manner, is it not quite certain that he, and he only, is a true believer, who looks to the crucified Jesus, and puts his whole trust in him, for his eternal salvation? Yes, beloved,

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

there must be a coming to him, an embracing of him, a taking hold of him, for ourselves. And we cannot do this, unless we be stripped of all hope from any other means. For the least allowance of hope from anything in ourselves, spoils the whole method of cure. Look well to yourselves, therefore, that the worm of self-righteousness eat not up all your religion, and leave you neither root nor branch. You must be stripped of all self-dependence; and, when so stripped, you must turn to the Cross, with both an eager and a stedfast gaze. For it is there alone, that Divine justice is satisfied. And it is there that you are to obtain peace and rest to your conscience: it is there, that you are to say, "We have everlasting righteousness and strength."<sup>1</sup> Look, then, to your crucified Redeemer with a steady, earnest, persevering gaze. And, if you cannot yet discern your Saviour so distinctly, as to apply his remedies suitably to your distempers; continue still to look for Him, in his word, and in his ordinances, till, in the light of the Spirit, you can behold him with comfort and with joy.<sup>2</sup>

Such is the manner, in which Jesus calls the attention of Nicodemus to the great work of redemption. And now, in order that this great mystery may be the more deeply impressed on

<sup>1</sup> See Isa. xxvi. 4; and xlv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See *Joseph Milner's Sermon on John* iii. 14, 15.



his heart, and that his national prejudices, as to the extent of the divine favour, may be removed. our Lord proceeds to declare to him the ground-work of this amazing mystery.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*<sup>3</sup>

In the thirteenth and fourteenth verses, our Lord had spoken of himself, as *the Son of man*. When, therefore, he now declares himself to be the *only begotten Son of God*, we are plainly taught that the term *Son of man* does not derogate at all from his divine excellency, as the Saviour of the world, but that it does, in a manner, involve all his adorable perfections. At the same time, Jesus sets before us in this passage the greatness of the *gift*, which has been vouchsafed to a rebellious world. For though Jesus be indeed the Son, yea, *the only begotten Son*; yet has the Father *so loved the world, that he has given this only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. And to show, still more emphatically, that if men perish, it is because they choose to destroy themselves, our Lord adds; *For God sent not his*

<sup>3</sup> Verses 16, 17.

*Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Observe, brethren ; It is not our own wisdom, or our own strength, which can save us. But this salvation, which, as we are here taught, implies *not perishing, but having everlasting life*, must be wrought out for us by the all-sufficiency and strength of Jehovah. And it is offered to those who, as the guilty offspring of Adam, are standing on the very brink of eternal destruction. Observe, also, how *salvation* is here distinctly opposed to CONDEMNATION ; as if to teach us that such an unspeakable benefit is the effect, not only of divine power, but of divine justice. Yes, the *only begotten Son*, in redeeming his people “from the curse of the law,”<sup>4</sup> by his own precious blood, has not only saved their souls from destruction ; but he has also brought in “everlasting righteousness ;”<sup>5</sup> that so they may stand before God, enjoying the light of his countenance, clothed with righteousness and *salvation*, and crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

But all the blessings of this salvation are expressly limited to those who believe. And, accordingly, in the sequel of this discourse, our Lord so applies the subject before us, to the hearts and consciences of men, as to demonstrate

<sup>4</sup> Gal. iii. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Dan. ix. 24.

the absolute necessity of faith in those, who would partake of this great salvation.

*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*<sup>6</sup>

Such is the solemn declaration contained in the eighteenth verse. And, in the three following verses, our Lord distinctly shows the equity of this divine sentence, in both of its parts.

Beginning, therefore, with those who believe not ;

*This, says Jesus, is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

*But, as he adds, with regard to those who believe, he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*<sup>7</sup>

The unbeliever and the believer are here described, respectively, as *doing evil*, and *doing truth*. But, in the original,<sup>8</sup> there is a difference of expression in the two verses, which is well deserving of our attention. For it seems to imply

<sup>6</sup> Verse 18.

<sup>7</sup> Verse 19—21.

<sup>8</sup> Ver. 20, *πράσσω* ; ver. 21, *ποιῶν*.

that the unbeliever is employed in a hard and bitter and laborious servitude; while the believer is sweetly constrained to a holy and cheerful obedience. There is, also, a difference of construction, in the original,<sup>9</sup> between the two clauses which speak, respectively, of the *deeds* of the unbeliever and the believer. One clause is so arranged, as to show that the doer of evil *hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* While the opposite construction of the other clause strongly enforces the declaration, that he, who *doeth truth*, is not ashamed to *come to the light*, because he knows that *HIS DEEDS have been wrought in God*; wrought, that is, in the light, in the strength, and in the love of *Him*, from whom proceedeth all *truth*. Yes, beloved, they who believe, look continually to God, as the only fountain of strength. And they can say, therefore, with St. Paul; “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”<sup>1</sup> They regard God, as the centre of all their affections, and the end of all their actions; referring to him alone, the glory of all which they are enabled to do or to suffer for His name’s sake, and casting all their crowns before his

<sup>9</sup> Ver. 20, τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ; ver. 21, αὐτὸς τὰ ἔργα, giving a manifest emphasis to ἔργα.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 5.

throne. And thus it is that, at all times, and under all circumstances, they come to *the light*, that their deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought IN GOD.

And now, brethren, as you review the passage before you, do you not see how aptly it illustrates one main design, which the evangelist keeps in view, through the whole of this gospel? For here, again, it is quite evident, that our Lord had sufficiently declared his mediatorial glory. Though the Pharisees and elders of the Jews had already manifested such inveterate hostility against him, yet here we see him, graciously revealing himself to one of their order, as the *only begotten Son of God*, sent for the salvation of those who believe. And, when our Lord traces the incredulity of the Jews to a *hatred of the light*, he not only gives us an example of his plainness and boldness of speech, but thereby illustrates and confirms the equity of the divine proceedings. For if *hatred of the light* were the cause of their incredulity, then no blame was to be attributed to the Light itself. But the whole weight of the blame fell on those, who *loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*. It was just, therefore, that they, who had perversely "chosen the evil and refused the good,"<sup>2</sup> should soon be visited with the righteous

<sup>2</sup> See Isa. vii. 15.

judgments of God. And surely there is a voice in these judgments, which seems to say to Christians, in every age; “Be not ye partakers with them,” in their perverse rejection of the truth. But, seeing that ye have been called out of darkness into marvellous light, pray that ye may have grace to “walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord,”<sup>3</sup> and approaching, continually, to the fountain of light and life, that your *deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.*

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## SECTION XII.

CHAP. III. ver. 22—36.

JOHN THE BAPTIST’S LAST TESTIMONY TO JESUS.

We have seen that our blessed Lord, at the very outset of his public ministry, openly manifested himself as the Son of God, to the Jews assembled at the feast of the passover. At the termination of the feast, the assembled multitudes would return to their own homes. And our Lord, also, departed from Jerusalem, that he

<sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 7, 8, 10.

might fill, with the rays of his glory, the whole of that land which had been so emphatically styled, in the prophetic Scriptures, "the land Immanuel," and the "delightsome land,"<sup>1</sup> the cause of Him who was to come.

*After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa ; and there he tarried them and baptized :*<sup>2</sup> that is, as we learn from following chapter,<sup>3</sup> our Lord baptized, not with his own hands, but by his disciples.

Thus does the evangelist describe our Lord's departure from Jerusalem, after the first passover. And, as we proceed with the history, we shall find that, in the interval between this and the next passover, the three parts of Palestine, Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee, were blessed with the manifestation of the glory of Christ. We are here told that he *tarried*, first, *in Judæa*. For he was "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ;"<sup>4</sup> and these were to be found chiefly in this quarter of the promised land, the regions containing a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Much, therefore, both of the first and second years of his public ministry, was passed in the land of Judæa, which was the better suited, moreover, for our Lord's purpose, inasmuch as the Baptist had there been employed, in pre-

<sup>1</sup> Isa. viii. 8 ; Mal. iii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 22.

<sup>3</sup> See chap. iv. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xv. 24.

ng the way before him. And, accordingly, our attention is now to be called to the Baptist's last solemn testimony to Jesus, occasioned by a spirit of jealousy, which some persons had evinced at our Lord's success.

*And John also was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. That is, (the word purifying being evidently used by this evangelist to denote baptism,) a question arose as to the comparative value and efficacy of the baptism performed, respectively, by John, and by the disciples of Jesus. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ver. 23—30.



The Baptist here declares to his disciples, that *his joy is fulfilled*. He had now attained the utmost height of all his wishes, as respected this life and his mysterious ministry. It was enough for him, that the day was arrived, in which he had *heard the bridegroom's voice*. He now felt assured that the purpose of his office was accomplished, and that nothing now remained for him to perform. As the aged Simeon had declared his readiness to depart, when "his eyes had seen the salvation"<sup>6</sup> of the Lord; even so the Baptist now declares, that all his earthly wishes were indeed fulfilled, inasmuch as he had heard the voice of the Angel of the Covenant, announcing the glad tidings of peace and salvation. The Lord himself had entered upon his own work; and the Baptist knew that it would be brought to a triumphant issue. *His joy, therefore, was now fulfilled.*

Yes, brethren, the soul of the Baptist was now filled with a just and holy joy. It was just; for the *voice of the bridegroom*, which he now heard, was, as it were, the seal of the Divine decree respecting the redemption of the world. It was holy; for it was not any earthly good, it was not any carnal desire, which produced this joy. And, assuredly, his heart must have been elevated far above all the honours and dignities, and far

<sup>6</sup> Luke ii. 29.

above all the endearments of this lower world, before he could say in such a spirit of entire acquiescence to the Divine will, *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

The Baptist, having thus described the excellence of our Lord's ministry, as compared with his own, now proceeds to explain the grounds of this distinction.

*He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.*<sup>7</sup>

If, in the preceding part of this testimony, the Baptist has abased himself, in comparison with Jesus, in this part he seeks, still more earnestly, to advance Jesus, and so to instruct his disciples concerning him, that, instead of grieving at the multitudes which flocked to him, they may repair to him themselves. *He that cometh from above,* not only will be hereafter, but *is*, even now, *above all.* For, although our Lord's mediatorial glory was not to be fully manifested until after his ascension, nevertheless, he was, even then, as he ever had been, *above all* creatures, in heaven or in earth. The form of a servant might for a time conceal, but it could not impair, the fulness of his divine perfections. But, on the other hand, *he that is of the earth is earthly, and*

<sup>7</sup> Ver. 31.

*speaketh of the earth.* That is, The Baptist's teaching was, comparatively speaking, weak and imperfect; not full, and clear, and powerful, like the teaching of Him, who spake with authority as a Divine Teacher, and of whom, therefore, the Baptist says again, so emphatically, in the last clause, *He that cometh from heaven is above all.*

By this comparison between the person and office of the Baptist and the Messiah, the minds of the inquirers were the better prepared to receive the more direct testimony, respecting the excellence of Christ, which the Baptist gives in the sequel of the chapter. And it is a testimony the more worthy to be observed, not only as being the last recorded testimony borne to Jesus by the Baptist, but, also, as being a plain intimation to his disciples, that, so far from his endeavouring to prevent their going over from him to Jesus, he desired, on the contrary, diligently to warn them, that all their salvation depended on Him alone. When the Baptist's disciples came to him to propose the question respecting baptism, they had said of Jesus, *Behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.* This was, evidently, the language of complaint; and it manifested a spirit of jealousy and discontent on the part of the Baptist's disciples. But far different were the feelings of the Baptist himself,

who, in the ardour of his zeal for the glory of his Lord and Master, concludes his answer to them in the following emphatic terms.

*And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*<sup>9</sup>

My brethren, You are here plainly taught what is your duty; viz. to *receive* the *testimony* which Jesus hath given. For, by *receiving his testimony*, you *set to your seal that God is true*. And does not this language of the Baptist powerfully illustrate the character of a true and lively faith? It is, as it were, to pledge ourselves for the truth of God's promises; to seal the truth as our own; to adopt it, and choose it, and solemnly assent unto it, as a man does who *sets his seal* to a written instrument. And it follows, therefore, that it is a solemn act to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is a surrender of all to God. It is the giving up of body, soul, and spirit, to

<sup>9</sup> Ver. 32—36.

Him, with a belief that he is true ; that he will fulfil all that he has promised ; and that he alone is able to save.

And how forcibly does the Baptist strengthen the argument for receiving our Lord's testimony, by describing Him as our Prophet and our Mediator.

Jesus Christ is our great Prophet: *for he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.* My brethren, of Him it might indeed be said, that he *spake the words of God* ; yea, that he *spake words*, which no one could have spoken but God himself. And it was evident, therefore, that ' God did not, in any finite measure, communicate the graces of his Spirit unto him, as he hath done to us men, but that he endued him with an infinite proportion thereof, as in whom the Godhead dwelleth bodily.'<sup>1</sup> The language of the Baptist corresponds with that employed by the evangelist, at the beginning of this gospel, where he describes the " Word " as having " dwelt among us, FULL of grace and truth." And remember, brethren, how it is there added, for our comfort, " Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."<sup>2</sup> Believers, therefore, are taught to regard Jesus Christ, in his prophetical character, not simply as giving them

<sup>1</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

<sup>2</sup> John i. 14, 16.

doctrines and precepts, for their instruction and guidance, but as actually writing these laws in their hearts; yea, as baptizing his faithful people with the Spirit of grace and truth. St. Paul repeats the same important and consolatory truth, when he says, "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ."<sup>3</sup> And how blessed is the thought, that all who have a measure of this gift now, according to their need, shall hereafter enjoy it in all its fulness: for "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known."<sup>4</sup>

Having thus shown the dignity of our Lord's *testimony*, when he is regarded as the great Prophet of the church, the Baptist describes, immediately afterwards, the excellency of his Mediatorial office: *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.* The Baptist here speaks of *all things*, as having been already *given into his hand*: because, although He did not take possession of his mediatorial kingdom till after his ascension, it had been *given*, or "appointed unto him,"<sup>5</sup> from eternity. And the gift had been solemnly ratified by the miraculous testimo-

<sup>3</sup> Ephes. iv. 7.<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12.<sup>5</sup> Luke xxii. 29.

nies respecting Him, as the Saviour of the world, both at his birth, and at his baptism.

Well, therefore, might the Baptist add, in conclusion; *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him:* or, as it might more strictly be rendered, *He that BELIEVETH on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that DISOBEYETH the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* The variation of the terms in the original<sup>6</sup> is very significant; for the latter phrase explains the former; and shows that the faith, to which the promise of eternal life is annexed, is an effectual principle of sincere and unreserved obedience. And it may be added that, when viewed in the connexion in which it stands, the term *disobedience* evidently implies rebellion against Him, who has been appointed to be "King of kings, and Lord of lords,"<sup>7</sup> and of whom it is here expressly declared, that *the Father hath given all things into his hands.* There is something, moreover, magnificently awful in the descending series of the several clauses. For, on the one hand, the Baptist, repeating the same delightful truth which our Lord had uttered, in his conversation with Nicodemus,<sup>8</sup> declares, with respect to

<sup>6</sup> ὁ πιστεύων—ὁ ἀπειθῶν.

<sup>7</sup> Rev. xix. 16.

<sup>8</sup> See verse 16.

him, who, with his heart, *believeth on the Son*, that he *HATH, OR IS ALREADY IN POSSESSION OF, everlasting life*. While, on the other hand, whatever may be a man's outward profession, or whatever may be his theoretic or historical belief, if he *obey not the Son*, not only does he not possess eternal life, but he does not possess anything worthy to be called *life* at all; nor, so persisting, can he ever hope to possess life, for he *shall not even see it*. But this is not the whole: for, as *everlasting life* is the present possession of the faithful, so the *wrath of God* is the present and permanent lot of the disobedient. For, observe how it is here said of the *wrath of God*, not only that it shall hereafter come, but that, even now, it *abideth on him*. Yes, beloved, "He that believeth not is condemned already."<sup>9</sup> This, remember, was our Lord's declaration to Nicodemus: and the Baptist, therefore, only repeats the same truth, with awful emphasis, when he describes the wrath of God as already *abiding on the unbeliever*.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, is the state of those who *obey not*, because they *believe not, the Son of God*? They do not, and, unless they repent, they *shall not see life*. Bring one naturally dead, my brethren,

<sup>9</sup> Verse 18.

<sup>1</sup> See *Bishop Jebb's Sacred Literature*, and *Doddridge's Family Expositor*.



into the splendour of the noonday brightness; he neither perceives its light, nor feels its warmth. offer him the most fragrant odours, he has no capacity to enjoy their fragrancy: tend to his acceptance gifts of the most rare and costly kind, he accepts them not. And why? Simply because he is dead, and therefore has no eye to see, no faculty to smell, no hand to receive. In like manner, bring one spiritually dead into the light of the glorious Gospel of God; he neither sees nor feels it. Jesus "is come a light into the world."<sup>2</sup> He is risen, as the "Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings;"<sup>3</sup> and yet men "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."<sup>4</sup> Offer the unbeliever the joys of faith, and the rewards of grace; and he will have no hand, no heart, to accept them. And why? Simply because he is dead, and has no gracious taste, no spiritual discernment.

But what, on the other hand, is the state of that man, *who believeth on the Son of God*? Once he was as dead as others that are still buried in the cares, and the business, and the pleasures of the world; but now he lives. The Spirit of the Lord has breathed upon him. He has heard the voice of the Son of God. He is alive from the dead. He feels other desires than he once felt; and he enjoys other things than he

<sup>2</sup> Chap. xii. 46.<sup>3</sup> Mal. iv. 2.<sup>4</sup> Ver. 19.

ONCE enjoyed. He now no longer lives, or wishes to live, without God in the world. He becomes concerned for his own soul, and the souls of others. Frequent and earnest inquiries about “the way, and the truth, and the life,”<sup>5</sup> stir within him. And “the life which he now lives in the flesh, he “lives by the faith of the Son of God.”<sup>6</sup> It is true that, amidst his conflicts and his failures, the pulse of his spiritual life sometimes beats feebly. But still the promise of *life*, the promise of continued, and increasing, and imperishable life, by Jesus Christ, always supports him. Nay, he feels verily persuaded that the same Lord, who has kindled within him the spark of this spiritual life, will keep it alive, even amidst an ocean of natural corruption. And he rejoices to know that the Father hath *given all things into his hand*, for the benefit of his believing people.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Chap. xiv. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>7</sup> See *Mudge's Memorial of Ministerial Labour*. Sermon viii.

## SECTION XIII.

## CHAP. IV. ver. 1—14.

THE FIRST PART OF OUR LORD'S CONVERSATION WITH  
THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

We have seen, brethren, that, on leaving Jerusalem, our Lord did not seek to withdraw himself from observation ; but that, on the contrary, he so filled Judea with his doctrine, that not only did many repair to him, but his fame reached the disciples of the Baptist, who disputed with the Jews concerning baptism,<sup>1</sup> as administered by the Baptist, and by Christ's disciples. We have seen, also, how an occasion was thus afforded for that last solemn testimony of the Baptist, in which he described Jesus as "the Bridegroom," or, the Head and Redeemer of the church, and in which he so earnestly inculcated the necessity of believing on Him, as the beloved of the Father, and as having "all things given into his hand."<sup>2</sup> And since all this was transacted in public, we have here a fresh confirmation of the fact, which is so fully established in

<sup>1</sup> Chap. iii. 25.<sup>2</sup> Chap. iii. 35.

this gospel, viz. that the glory of Christ had been sufficiently manifested to the Jews, from the very beginning of his public ministry, and that their unbelief, therefore, was altogether without excuse.

In this and the two following sections, we are to consider a passage in our Saviour's history, which exhibits to us a remarkable contrast to this incredulity of the Jews. And I pray that, as we dwell upon it, we may feel ourselves enabled to repeat, from the very ground of the heart, the declaration of the faithful Sycharites, that "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."<sup>3</sup>

The cause of our Lord's departure from Judea is thus related by the evangelist :

*When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea, and departed again<sup>4</sup> into Galilee.<sup>5</sup>*

Our Lord, knowing that the Pharisees were plotting against him, retired from Judea ; both because his hour was not yet come, and because the tender faith of his disciples was not yet to be exposed to the breath of persecution. *He left Judea, therefore, and departed again into Galilee ;* this being evidently the journey referred to by

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 42.

<sup>4</sup> See chap. i. 43.

<sup>5</sup> Ver. 1—3.

St. Matthew, and by St. Mark, who relate that, after "John was put into prison, Jesus departed into Galilee."<sup>6</sup>

*And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus, i. e. thus weary, on the well ; and it was about the sixth hour.*<sup>7</sup>

This place, formerly known by the name of "Shechem," or "Sichem," was memorable on various accounts. And it was manifestly ordered, by the ever-watchful providence of God, that Jesus should now honour with his presence, and with his discourse, a spot which was so illustrious a monument of patriarchal faith. For Jesus was He, whose salvation was alike expected by Jacob, when he gave this portion to his son Joseph,<sup>8</sup> and by Joseph, when he ordered his bones to be carried up thither out of Egypt.<sup>9</sup> Jesus, therefore, was now present on this very spot, to show that the hopes of the patriarchs would certainly be accomplished.

The evangelist says, that *it was about the sixth hour*, or at mid-day, when our Lord *sat thus on*

<sup>6</sup> See Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ver. 4—6.

<sup>8</sup> Gen. xlviii. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. l. 25, compared with Josh. xxiv. 32.

*the well.* And, from this distinct notice of the hour of the day, we can the more readily understand why our blessed Lord should have seated himself, weary and thirsty, at this well of Jacob, seeing that he was exposed to the heat of the mid-day sun; and why, in the two following verses, the woman of Samaria and the disciples are described as being, respectively, in search of *water*, and of *meat*; seeing that it was the custom of the Jews to dine at that hour.

*There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat,<sup>1</sup> or food.)*

Thus we see, brethren, that the conversation was commenced by Him, whose grace must indeed always 'go before us that we may have a good will, and work with us, when we have that good will.'<sup>2</sup> Our Lord begins with earthly things, that he may gradually lead the mind of the woman up to heavenly things. And, although he was now suffering from the heat of the noon-day sun, yet it plainly appears, from the whole tenor of his conversation with the woman, that he did not so ardently thirst for water from the well, as for the salvation of this poor sinner. His language plainly shows that he desired to satisfy her soul with the waters of life, rather

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Art. x.

than to satisfy his own thirst with the water of Jacob's well. And may we not truly say, that if Jacob once desired to "roll the stone from the well's mouth," to water the flock which Rachael kept,<sup>3</sup> much more did the true Israel now desire to open the fountain of life, for the refreshment of this lost sheep? Yes, brethren, it was not only his "meat,"<sup>4</sup> but also his *drink*, thus to do his Father's will, by "seeking and saving that which was lost."<sup>5</sup>

*Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings, or, rather, no friendly intercourse, with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*<sup>6</sup>

Our blessed Lord, who, be it remembered, was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,"<sup>7</sup> is now suffering from bodily thirst; and he asks the woman of Samaria *to give him to drink*. She, on the other hand, is in need of the Saviour's grace; but, not feeling her need, and not knowing its great price, she does not apply for it. But our Lord, as if forgetting his own bodily

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxix. 10.<sup>4</sup> See ver. 34.<sup>5</sup> Luke xix. 10.<sup>6</sup> Ver. 9, 10.<sup>7</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

wants, immediately proceeds to tell her that, had *she known the gift of God*, the gospel of salvation, *and who it was that said unto her, Give me to drink, she would have asked of him, and he would have given her living water.* Yes, brethren, such a petition would have been the necessary consequence of such *knowledge*. For, when the soul is once awakened to a sense of its poverty, and of the greatness of the gifts which God bestows in the Gospel of Christ, it must, of necessity, flee to the Lord, “hungering and thirsting after righteousness.”<sup>8</sup> Nor would the woman have asked in vain. For Jesus would have *given her living water*. He would have given her the great things promised in the Everlasting Covenant, which are here described under the image of *living water*; because they have HIM for their fountain, who is “the way, and the truth, and the life;”<sup>9</sup> because they immediately restore the dead soul to life; and because they shall endure through the ages of eternity. As we proceed with this gospel, we shall find our Lord employing, in like manner, the figures of “bread,”<sup>1</sup> and “light,”<sup>2</sup> to illustrate the great truths of the covenant of grace. And should we not admire his wisdom and goodness, in thus enforcing his heavenly lessons by images derived from those

<sup>8</sup> Matt. v. 6.<sup>9</sup> John xiv. 6.<sup>1</sup> Chap. vi.<sup>2</sup> Chap. viii. ix. and xii.



elements, in the natural world, which are most simple, most necessary, most common, and most useful to all?

But *the woman saith unto him, not yet understanding the real scope of our Saviour's language. Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living or running, water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Art thou able, then, to open for us another well! or, to supply us with better water than the water contained in this well, of which Jacob drank himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*<sup>3</sup>

In these words, our Lord replies, directly, to the doubts and difficulties which had suggested themselves to the woman's mind, and demonstrates that He is indeed *greater than Jacob*, by showing, in language plainly applicable to all the promises of the gospel covenant, and to all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, the superiority of the water, which he would give, com-

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 11—14.

ared with that which was drawn out of Jacob's well.

*Whoever, says Jesus, drinketh of this water shall never thirst.* That is; He shall never thirst with that feverish and distempered thirst of the soul, which indicates an entire privation of God's grace, and of the comfort of his Holy Spirit: he shall never thirst, with that burning and desperate feeling which must be experienced by the unbeliever.<sup>4</sup> For there is another, and that a salutary thirst, which the believer will always manifest; viz. a thirst after divine grace, and a fervent desire to enjoy the light of God's countenance. This the believer will have as long as he is in this world, where he is never fully satisfied, nor is his thirst entirely allayed.<sup>5</sup> 'A desiring thirst,' says Matthew Henry, 'the believer has; for he desires nothing more than God, and he desires still more and more of God; but it is not a despairing thirst.' For he knows that there is a fountain of *living water*, to which he may continually repair, and of which he may, at all times, and under all circumstances, freely partake.

It is true, indeed, that, in this life, believers have only a few drops of this *living water*, in comparison with the ocean of eternal glory which

<sup>4</sup> See Isa. lxx. 13; Hos. ii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> See Isa. lv. 1, compared with John vii. 37, 38.

is in store for them hereafter. But still they are able, by faith, to anticipate the enjoyment of future blessedness. And as often, therefore, as they are led, by the exercise of a true and lively faith, to *drink of this living water*, they are filled according to the measure of their present capacities, with the goodness of Jehovah. It is to place this truth before us in a still stronger light that our Saviour adds ; *The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. And must it not follow, then, my beloved brethren, that if we still thirst, with a burning, a feverish, and a despairing thirst, it is not, it cannot be, from any failure in the streams of *living water* ; but from the want of faith in our own hearts ?

The more we consider the image which our Saviour here employs, the more we must perceive how admirably it is suited to shadow forth the excellence of those heavenly truths, which are revealed to us in the Gospel. For these truths are to the weary soul a perpetual fountain of joy and consolation ; through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, they will enable us to bring forth much fruit ; they are suited to elevate our hearts to high and heavenly things ; and they will strengthen and refresh the soul of the christian pilgrim, until he reaches that ocean of *living water*, from whence these springs proceed, and

whither they all return. And when our Lord says, of the *water that he shall give*, that it shall be in the believer, a *well*, or fountain of *water, springing up into everlasting life*, we should consider how striking is the contrast pointed out, in these words, between this fountain of *living waters*, and the waters which *spring up* from a more earthly fountain. These ascend but a little above the surface of the earth, and then return. But the *living waters*, which are freely promised to every believer; the blessed consolations of the Holy Spirit, of which all are invited to partake, are carried up, by a strength more than human, to the highest heaven, and to *everlasting life*. Other streams, moreover, are transitory and changing: but these never fail. And, therefore, if at any time we suffer an interruption of these refreshing influences, the inconstancy is in us, not in the waters, which for ever flow on in their course. Like their type in the wilderness, they follow the people of God, in all the windings of their pilgrimage, until they reach the promised land. Other things fail. The changes and chances of life affect all the sources of man's temporal expectations and joys. But the water, which, through the Redeemer, is given to the believer, shall never fail. Amidst all the changes of outward circumstances, in prosperity or in

affliction, in life or in death, it shall still refresh and cheer the soul; and *shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life!*

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## SECTION XIV.

CHAP. IV. ver. 15—26.

THE SECOND PART OF OUR LORD'S CONVERSATION  
WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

It may seem strange that, after what our Lord had already said, the woman of Samaria should still have remained in ignorance as to the real scope of his conversation with her. But the deceitfulness of our corrupted hearts throws a veil over the eyes of the understanding, and makes us slow to comprehend the things which concern our everlasting peace. And it is absolutely necessary, therefore, that we should be convinced of our sinful state, in order that we may be led to desire God's righteousness, and to thirst after the "living water" which is provided for us in the Gospel. This truth is powerfully inculcated

on the remaining part of our Lord's conversation with the woman at Jacob's well.

*The woman*, still supposing that the water of which Jesus spake was only to quench her bodily thirst, *saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.* *Jesus*, immediately taking up the last words she had uttered, *saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.* *The woman answered and said, I have no husband.* *Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.*<sup>1</sup>

Brethren, observe the wisdom which our Lord here displays. For he convicts the woman out of her own mouth, and thus opens a way for a more direct approach to her heart and her conscience. Observe, also, the tenderness of his love. For he not only seeks her salvation, but he declares himself ready to admit the man who was *not her husband*, as well as herself, to a participation of the "living waters;" that so, as they had been companions in sin, they might now share together in the blessedness of pardon, and in the joy of God's salvation. *Go, call thy husband*, says Jesus, that he may participate with thee in what I have to bestow, *and come hither.* In replying to these words, the woman had purposely concealed that,

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 15—18.

which was enough to cover her with shame and confusion. Our Lord, therefore, briefly, but fully, exposes the evasiveness of the reply, saying, *Thou hast well said, I have no husband : for thou hast had five husbands ; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband : in that saidst thou truly.*

And Jesus did not speak in vain. For, immediately,

*The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that the woman of Samaria was now at once filled with love and veneration for the mysterious stranger, not only by reason of the knowledge which he had evinced of the sins of her heart, and the complexion of her life ; but also on account of the mingled majesty and gentleness of his deportment towards her. She desires, therefore, to listen to his doctrine. But there was a difficulty in her mind, which must be previously removed. And this had respect to the grand subject of controversy between the Jews and Samaritans, which she thus briefly and clearly proposes for his determination :

*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye, the Jews, say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*<sup>3</sup>

The woman had now shown her willingness to listen to him as her teacher. And, accordingly,

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 20.

Our Lord proceeds to declare to her in what the true worship of God consists.

*Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*<sup>4</sup>

Instead of directly replying to the difficulty which the woman had proposed to him, Jesus at once raises her mind beyond the mere circumstance of place, by informing her that a more perfect dispensation was now at hand, and that the worship of God was soon to be observed everywhere, and with as much acceptance in one place as another. *Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* Our Lord then adds, evidently referring to the comparative ignorance and corruption of the Samaritan worship, *Ye worship ye know not what.* For though the Samaritans received the five books of Moses, yet they rejected the prophets. Originally, also, they had joined the worship of idols to that of

<sup>4</sup> Verse 21—24.



the true God.<sup>5</sup> They had, moreover, no authority for building their temple, or for conducting public worship by sacrifices there. In so doing, they were not obeying the true God, nor offering the worship which he had commanded or would approve. *But we*, the Jews, for our Lord speaks of himself simply according to the apprehension entertained of him by the woman of Samaria *know what we worship*. That is, 'We Jews worship God according to the prescript of his own law, in regard to the main substance of religion.'<sup>6</sup> And we know that we are in the right path; *for salvation is of the Jews*. Mark the emphasis of our Lord's language; and consider, brethren, that *salvation was of the Jews*, because with the Jews, as his peculiar people, God had made his covenant of grace and *salvation*; because, from them; as concerning the flesh, sprang that Messiah, who brought *salvation* to a guilty world; because to them "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;"<sup>7</sup> because from them, also, were to be chosen the first preachers of the glad tidings of *salvation*; and because those glad tidings were to be preached first among them, and afterwards through all the kingdoms and nations of the earth.

<sup>5</sup> See 2 Kings xvii. 26—34.      <sup>6</sup> *Bishop Hall's Paraphrase.*

<sup>7</sup> Rom. ix. 4.

But although, in this extensive sense, *salvation was of the Jews*, yet everything hitherto had only been preparatory to another and a fuller dispensation. Yea, says Jesus, *the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* These words have been sometimes understood, as dispensing altogether with external worship. But it is evident that this is a most perverse interpretation of our Lord's language. The worship of the Gospel is, indeed, much more spiritual than that of the Law. But to say that the worship of the Gospel should be only spiritual, and that no external worship is required therein, is repugnant, not only to the practice and usage of the christian religion in all ages, but also to the express ordinances of the Gospel itself. For what are the sacraments of the New Testament? Are they not rites, wherein and wherewith God is served and worshipped? The consideration of the holy Eucharist alone would be sufficient to confute such an interpretation. For is not the commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ's death upon the cross, in the symbols of bread and wine, an external worship? And yet with this rite hath the christian church, in all ages, beginning

with that of the apostles,<sup>8</sup> been accustomed to make her solemn address of prayer and supplication to the Divine Majesty, even as the Jews did under the elder dispensation, with their sacrifices and burnt-offerings. As for bodily gestures and postures, we know that our blessed Lord himself lifted up his sacred eyes to heaven, when he prayed for Lazarus ; and that he fell on his face when he prayed in his agony. And we know also, that his apostles and disciples were accustomed always to " bow the knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." <sup>9</sup>

When our Lord tells us, therefore, that we are to worship God *in spirit and in truth*, we are to understand him, not as forbidding external worship, but only as teaching us to perform that worship aright, by regarding it as a sign or expression of our reverential fear of God. The " people" of God are not to " draw near with their mouth, and with their lips to honour him," while they have " removed their heart far from him ;" <sup>1</sup> but they are to worship him *in spirit*, i. e. with their understandings enlightened, their wills subdued, and their affections sanctified, by the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit ; and *in truth*, i. e. according to that full revelation of

<sup>8</sup> See Acts ii. 42.

<sup>9</sup> Eph. iii. 14. And see *Joseph Mede and Bishop Beveridge* on John iv. 23, 24.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxix. 13.

God, which is contained in the scriptures of truth. And since He, whom the evangelist has already<sup>2</sup> described as “full of truth,” and who afterwards<sup>3</sup> describes himself as “the Truth,” is revealed in the Gospel as the one great Mediator, in whom alone, as the substance of all the types, and as the end of all the promises, the worship of a Father can be acceptable to the Father; it plainly follows that they only worship God *in spirit and in truth*, who, with their minds elevated, and their affections influenced by the Holy Spirit, have “access through Christ unto the Father,” well knowing that, at all times and under all circumstances, they may “have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in thus commanding us to worship God *in spirit and in truth*, our Lord seems emphatically to remind us, for our guidance and instruction, that the Holy Spirit, who “takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us,”<sup>5</sup> operates, not by an immediate voice, or whisper within us, but always through the medium of the scriptures of *truth*.

After hearing what our Lord had said, the woman of Samaria, without offering any more difficulties or objections, but, at the same time, without immediately acquiescing in the justice

<sup>2</sup> Chap. i. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Chap. xiv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. ii. 18; and iii. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Chap. xvi. 15.

of what she had heard, refers to the coming of the Messiah the entire decision of the question, which she had proposed to Jesus, as a prophet.

*The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.*<sup>7</sup>

In this answer of the woman of Samaria, we see the truth of what has been said by Justin Martyr, viz. that the Samaritans, as well as the Jews, were in expectation of the Messiah. We learn, also, from the same answer, that the Samaritans entertained some just views respecting the Messiah. For they were evidently expecting him, not only as a king to reign over them, but also as a prophet, to reveal to them the divine will. And, as we proceed with the chapter, we shall find many of the inhabitants of this city of Sychar expressly acknowledging him, as "the Saviour of the world."<sup>8</sup>

After this clear declaration, on the part of the woman of Samaria, as to her expectation of the Messiah, and of the benefits to be derived from Him,

*Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*<sup>9</sup>

Thus does our Lord close his conversation with the woman of Samaria, by declaring to her that

<sup>7</sup> Verse 25.

<sup>8</sup> See verse 42.

<sup>9</sup> Verse 26.

He is that very Messiah, who gives life unto the world. *I am HE*, says Jesus; even that Messiah, whom you profess to expect. And in saying, *I that speak unto thee am he*, our Lord implies that the woman of Samaria might now perceive the complete fulfilment of all her expectations respecting this promised Messiah. For the woman had said; *I know that Messiah cometh*. And behold, says Jesus, *HE* is already come. The woman had also said; *When he is come, he will tell us all things*. And behold, says Jesus, he is now speaking unto thee; thus graciously offering himself to the woman, as her teacher, that so he might excite in her mind an earnest desire to be instructed, and might, thereby, in part fulfil those remarkable words of the prophet: "Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I."<sup>1</sup>

When conversing with the Jews respecting himself, our Lord generally used the language of caution and reserve; because they were disposed either to excite insurrection, in his behalf; or to accuse him to the Romans. But when conversing with the woman of Samaria, he uses the utmost plainness of speech, and unreservedly informs her, that he was indeed the promised Messiah. We have seen also how the woman's in-

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lii. 6.

quiring and teachable spirit had led the way to this plain and gracious declaration. And may we not believe, therefore, that a power accompanied his words, which enabled her to believe in him and to embrace his salvation. Here, then, as Beza observes, we see Christ 'leaving the proud Pharisees, and communicating the treasures of everlasting life to a poor sinful woman, and a stranger. He refutes the gross errors of the Samaritans, and defends the true service of God, which was delivered to the Jews: *but so that he calleth them both back to Himself, as One, whom alone all the fathers, and all the ceremonies of the law, did regard.*' And we may rest assured, brethren, that if we also look to Him, who is the substance of all the shadows, and the accomplishment of all the promises, and with whom is the residue of the Spirit, He will so impart to us the abundance of His grace, that, always approaching the throne of grace, in His name, and pleading His gracious promises, we shall be enabled to *worship the Father in spirit and in truth.*

## SECTION XV.

### CHAP. IV. ver. 27—42.

JESUS ACKNOWLEDGED, BY THE INHABITANTS OF  
SYCHAR, TO BE THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

St. John, having recorded our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, and proceeding now to relate what ensued after that conversation, notices, in the first place, the return of his disciples from the city to Jacob's well.

*And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*<sup>1</sup>

It was ordered by Him, who "seeth our ways, and counteth all our steps,"<sup>2</sup> that the disciples, who "were gone away unto the city to buy meat,"<sup>3</sup> should return just as our Lord had concluded his conversation with the woman of Samaria. And, as we shall presently see, an opportunity was thus afforded to him for instruct-

<sup>1</sup> Verse 27.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxxi. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 8.



ing them on the subject of that spiritual harvest which they were afterwards to reap. When they came, they  *marvelled*  that he should be talking with a Samaritan woman. But such was their veneration for their Lord and Master, that they did not presume to inquire respecting his motives or intentions: *No man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*

But though they were silent, the woman of Samaria did not hold her peace. And, whatever might have led the disciples to  *marvel* , this was, indeed, worthy of all admiration; viz. that a poor sinful woman should so soon be changed into a herald of salvation.

*The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.\**

Although a woman, bearing her testimony in favour of Christ, and that woman known to be a sinner, might, at first, have seemed a contemptible witness in the eyes of the inhabitants of that city, yet they must have been moved, as well by the fervour and earnestness of her appeal, as by her sincerity in relating what had fallen from the lips of our Lord respecting herself. She does not say; Come, see a man, who has told me

\* Verse 28—30.

strange things concerning religious worship, and the laws of it; or, Come, see a man, who has decided the controversy between this mountain and Jerusalem; or, Come, see a man, who calls himself the Messiah; but, *Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did*: Come, see a man, who has convinced me of all my sins: *is not this the Christ?* The appeal was not to be resisted. Accordingly, not one or two only, but all who had listened to the woman's narrative, immediately accompanied her to the place where Jesus was still sitting with his disciples. And thus, at the word of a woman, and that woman a sinner, do we find these men of Sychar going forth to Christ, and actually about to invite into their city HIM, who was, so soon afterwards, to be cast forth from the city of the Jews, and to be nailed to the accursed tree!

The evangelist now proceeds to relate, in a conversation between Christ and his disciples, how our Lord was himself affected by what had taken place. In this conversation, our Lord first declares, generally, the joy which he experienced. And he then describes, more particularly, the ground of that joy; while, at the same time, he calls upon his disciples to rejoice with him, inasmuch as the present work was to be regarded as a prelude of the great spiritual harvest, which was now at hand.

*In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*<sup>5</sup>

As, before, our Lord cared not to quench his own thirst, when he might save a lost soul; so do we now find him disregarding the food which his disciples offered him, because of the joy which he felt in contemplating the first fruits of the coming harvest. *I have meat to eat*, says Jesus. *that ye know not of*; thus, according to his custom, ascending from things earthly to things divine, that so he might elevate the minds and hearts of his disciples. And with what peculiar emphasis might it be said, that he had *meat to eat that they knew not of*? For he does not lose sight of the soul he has just gained. No: His Spirit accompanies the woman into the city; he is upon her lips, to bless the word which she speaks; he thus seeks out, among the inhabitants of Sychar, those whom he may offer to the Father; and he operates in their hearts, to make them obedient to the voice of a woman.

But our Lord's meaning was as yet hidden from the disciples.

*Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Verses 31, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Verses 33, 34.

In these words, our Lord describes, more particularly, the ground of his joy : *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.* Yes, brethren, the one great object which made him forget weariness and the wants of nature, was *to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish the work* which the Father had given him to perform. He esteemed this “ more than his necessary food.”<sup>7</sup> And if we consider the occasions, on which it is either said or implied that Jesus rejoiced, we shall find that he was always filled with joy, when he set before him the riches of his Father’s love, and contemplated the fulfilment of the divine promises.<sup>8</sup> But while these words describe the ground of the joy, which our Lord now experienced ; do they not also inculcate a solemn lesson upon all the ministers of the gospel ? Yes, beloved, every minister of Christ may well tremble under the weight and the dignity of these three words ; the *will*, the *mission*, and the *work* of God. Oh ! what dependence ought we to have on his *will* ; and how earnest should we be to fulfil it ! With what prudence should we exercise the authority which his *mission* confers on us ! And with

<sup>7</sup> Job. xxiii. 12.

<sup>8</sup> See Matt. xi. 25 ; Luke x. 21 ; and John xiii. 27, compared with 31.

what ardour and purity should we apply ourselves to the *work* of God!

Such reflections are still more forcibly suggested by the remaining part of our Lord's address to his disciples. For, in these concluding verses, he shows them how they ought to rejoice with him, at the prospect of the great spiritual harvest, which was now at hand.

*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*<sup>9</sup>

Here, again, as at the beginning of his address,<sup>1</sup> our Lord raises the minds of his disciples from earth to heaven, by availing himself of what would seem to be a proverbial expression, in use among the Jews, that so he might turn their thoughts from the natural to the spiritual harvest, in which they were soon to be employed. *Say not ye, there are yet four months, the usual time, in Judæa, from sowing the seed to the harvest, and then cometh harvest?* That is, The husbandman, when he sows his seed, is compelled to wait a considerable time, before it produces a crop. He is encouraged, however, in sowing it; because he expects fruit, though it is not immediate. But, *behold, I say*

<sup>9</sup> Verse 35.

<sup>1</sup> See verse 31—33.

unto you, thus evidently designing to place what he was about to utter, in marked contrast with the language of the above proverb ; *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields ; for they are white already to harvest.* See the Samaritans coming to hear the Gospel, as a plain indication that the seed has already sprung up, and as a sure earnest of the full harvest, which you shall soon be employed in gathering in.

In the three following verses, our Lord both encourages his disciples with a promise of reward, and reminds them how many had been labouring in preparing the way for the great harvest about to be gathered in.

*And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal : that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour : other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*<sup>2</sup>

The prophets had long laboured to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist had just appeared, also, as the messenger,

<sup>2</sup> Verse 36—38. ‘The sowing was the doctrine of the law and the prophets. For then the seed, being cast into the ground, did produce only green corn. But the doctrine of the Gospel, because it brought men unto perfect ripeness, is fitly compared unto the harvest.’—*Calvin.*

to prepare the way before Him. And the Saviour himself, by his personal ministry, was preparing the way for that success which should afterwards attend the preaching of the Gospel. Yes, brethren, our Lord was now himself preparing the way for his disciples. And whether they looked to themselves, or to those who had preceded them, or to those who should come after them, it was He, and he only, who could "give the increase."<sup>3</sup> For he is the only "Lord of the harvest;"<sup>4</sup> and all who have been, or shall be, employed in gathering it in, will *lift up their eyes*, and their hearts, to him, in faith and in prayer. They will rejoice that they are permitted to bear any part, however small, in bringing sinners to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and they will look forward to the day, when *both he that soweth and he that reapeth will rejoice together*, and shall be "as the stars for ever and ever."<sup>5</sup>

The evangelist, having thus related the sequel of our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, as it respected the disciples, the woman, and our Lord himself, now describes the effect produced on the inhabitants of Sychar.

*And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when*

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 6.<sup>4</sup> Matt. ix. 38.<sup>5</sup> Dan. xii. 3.

*the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*<sup>6</sup>

Here, brethren, we find many of the inhabitants of Sychar believing on Christ, *for the saying* of a sinful woman; while the Jews had refused to believe on him, *for the saying* of that remarkable man, the Baptist, who was “filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”<sup>7</sup> It was, manifestly, the Spirit of the Lord, which operated on the hearts of the Samaritans, as they listened to the voice of this woman. And, surely, we must feel constrained to acknowledge how entirely the awakening of the human heart is to be ascribed to the power of divine grace, when we consider how, on the present occasion, it pleased the Lord of the harvest to bless the words of a sinful, despised female; who was thus permitted not only to take her place among the witnesses of the truth, but to do more toward the propagation of the Gospel, than had hitherto been effected by the apostles themselves. For they had been employed, as the ministers of

<sup>6</sup> Verse 39—42.

<sup>7</sup> Luke i. 15.



Christ, in baptizing his disciples; but had not yet been sent forth to preach.

And how did these believing Samaritans show the reality of their faith? By *beseeking him that he would tarry with them*. We do not read of any such request on the part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And we know that the Gergesenes “besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.”<sup>8</sup> But these faithful Sycharites beseech him to abide with them. Accordingly he abode with them two days. And the fruit of his short sojourn in that city may well put to shame thousands and ten of thousands, to whom the Gospel has been preached for years, but preached, alas! in vain. *For many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* Faith has so enlarged their understanding, and opened their hearts, that they no longer are disposed to boast of their “fathers,”<sup>9</sup> or to ask for any exclusive privileges; but they rejoice to believe in Jesus, as *the Saviour of the world*. Upon the testimony of the woman, many of them had believed him to be a prophet, or some extraordinary messenger from heaven. But others of them had now conversed with him themselves; and, *because*

<sup>8</sup> Matt. viii. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Verse 12.

*of his own word*, they believed him to be the promised Messiah, who was to be Salvation, not only to the Jews, and the Samaritans, but also to the ends of the earth. Yes, said they, *We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD !*

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## SECTION XVI.

CHAP. IV. ver. 43—54.

JESUS HEALETH THE RULER'S SON.

*Now after two days*, says the evangelist, *Jesus departed thence, and went into Galilee.*<sup>1</sup>

We can well believe, brethren, that our Lord's departure must have been a severe trial to the Samaritan converts. For if, when St. Paul left Miletus, the company of believers "wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,"<sup>2</sup> how much more afflictive must have been the bereavement of the inhabitants of Sychar, when deprived of the bodily presence of the Author of life and salvation ! But they would acquiesce in

<sup>1</sup> Verse 43.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 37.

the divine counsels; and would deem it a sufficient privilege, that He, who spake of himself, during his earthly ministry, as being sent only unto "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," should have been so gracious to them, as he passed through Samaria. They would acknowledge how meet it was that the light now should be manifested in other places. And they would acknowledge, also, that their faith did not stand in the bodily presence of Christ, in which, indeed, even the other parts of Palestine were to rejoice only for a short season. Such was the manner, brethren, in which the tender faith of these Samaritan converts was to be brought into immediate and active exercise, by the departure of our Lord *into Galilee*.

After stating that our Lord *went into Galilee*, St. John adds;

*For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.*<sup>3</sup>

By Galilee, therefore, we are to understand, not that country, generally, as including Nazareth, but, more strictly, the territory of *Galilee*, as contradistinguished from that city.<sup>5</sup> Nazareth might be described as *our Lord's own country*; because, though not born there, he had been

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xv. 24; and x. 5, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Verse 44.

<sup>5</sup> In like manner, at chap. iii. ver. 22, St. John employs the term "Judea," in contradistinction to "Jerusalem."

brought up, and had hitherto resided chiefly, in that city. But, on the present occasion, Jesus went not to Nazareth, because he *himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.* It had been so with the prophets before him, brethren; and it was now so with Him, who was the great antitype of them all. For while Jesus was received gladly by the strangers of Samaria; he was despised by the inhabitants of Nazareth, with respect to whom it might so emphatically be said, that “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”<sup>6</sup>

*Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.*<sup>7</sup>

These Galileans were, as compared with the inhabitants of many of the other parts of Palestine, remote from Jerusalem. But, not deterred by the length or the difficulty of the journey, they had been accustomed, it seems, to observe the great feast of the passover with strictness, according to the command of God. Nor was their diligence left unrewarded; for there they had seen the Angel of the covenant, the long expected Lord of the temple. And we are now told that they *received him* with all readiness, because they had *seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast.*

<sup>6</sup> Chap. i. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ver

*So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.*<sup>8</sup>

‘Seldom do blessings go alone. Our Saviour had not, hitherto, in all these coasts of Galilee, done any miracle but here. Whosoever hath,” says Jesus, “to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”<sup>9</sup> And, accordingly, where he had supplied the bridegroom’s wine, there he heals the ruler’s son. The evangelist tells us that *there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.* ‘And happy was it for him that *his son was sick.* Otherwise, he had not been acquainted with his Saviour: but his soul had continued *sick* of ignorance and unbelief. And why else, indeed, doth our good God send us pain, losses, opposition, but that he may be sought to? Are we afflicted? Whither should we go but to Cana, to seek Christ? Whither, but to the Cana of heaven, where our water of sorrow is turned to the wine of gladness; and to that omnipotent Physician, who healeth all our infirmities?’<sup>1</sup>

*When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought*

<sup>8</sup> Verse 46.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. xiii. 12; Mark iv. 25; Luke viii. 18.

<sup>1</sup> *Bishop Hall’s Contemplations.*

*him that he would come down and heal his son : for he was at the point of death.*<sup>2</sup>

‘ This Ruler was neither faithless, nor faithful. Had he been quite faithless, he had not taken such pains to come to Christ. Had he been faithful, he had not made this suit to Christ, when he was come ; beseeching him to *come down and heal his son ; for he was at the point of death.* Come down, says the ruler, as if Christ could not have cured him absent. *He is at the point of death ;* as if that power could not have raised him up, being dead. How much difference was here between the centurion,<sup>3</sup> and the ruler ! The one came for his servant ; the other for his son. But the son was not more above the servant, than the faith which sued for the servant, surpassed that which sued for the son. The one can say ; “ Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof : but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” The other seems to say ; Lord, come under my roof, or my son cannot be whole. *Heal my son,* had been a good suit ; for Christ is the only physician for all diseases. But, *come down and heal my son,* was to teach God how to work.’<sup>4</sup>

*Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Verse 47.

<sup>3</sup> See Matt. viii.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Hall.

<sup>5</sup> Verse 48.

Thus ' he, who came to complain of his son's sickness, hears of his own : *Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.* Because Christ's miracles came to him only by hearsay, therefore he believes not enough ; but so speaks to Christ as to some ordinary physician : *Come down and heal.*'<sup>6</sup> My brethren, in this answer which Jesus returned to the ruler, He at once showed His omniscience, by which He penetrated into the very secrets of his heart, and His faithfulness, which led Him to point out to the nobleman the disease of his own soul, before He would cure that bodily disease of his son, which was the subject of his petition.

*The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.*<sup>7</sup>

It is evident that the ruler's passionate wish for his child's recovery, rendered him insensible to the reproof, which our Lord's answer was suited to convey. He thinks more of the recovery of that son, than of the cure of his own spiritual disease. And although he is not to be blamed for still urging his petition, yet he manifests unbelieving impatience in his address, in which he again entreats Jesus to *go down ere his child die* ; as if our Lord had not power to cure him, though absent from him in body ; or to call him back to life, if already dead. But, notwithstanding all

<sup>6</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

<sup>7</sup> Verse 49.

these defects in the petitioner, our Lord not only grants, but goes beyond the words of his request.

*Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth.*<sup>8</sup>

‘As some tender mother, that gives the breast instead of the rod, to her unquiet child, so deals Jesus with our perverseness.’<sup>9</sup> And how differently, moreover, does God deal with different men, according to the difference of their faith! ‘The Centurion’s servant was sick; the Ruler’s son. The Centurion doth not sue unto Christ to come. He only says: “My servant is sick of a palsy;” and Christ answers him: “I will come and heal him.” The Ruler sues unto Christ, that he would *come and heal his son*. Christ will not go, but only says; *Go thy way, thy son lives*. The Centurion’s faith, therefore, could do more than the Ruler’s greatness; and that faithful man’s servant hath more regard than this great man’s son.’<sup>1</sup> But yet observe how graciously our Lord deals with the latter. ‘The Ruler’s request was: *Come and heal*; Christ’s answer is: *Go thy way, thy son lives*. Our merciful Saviour meets those in the end, whom he crosses in the way. Yea, how sweetly doth he correct our prayers; and, while he doth not give us WHAT

<sup>8</sup> Verse 50.

<sup>9</sup> *Bishop Hall*.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*.



we ask, he gives us, always, BETTER than we asked.' <sup>2</sup>

*And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.* <sup>3</sup>

Thus, 'with one word, doth Christ heal two patients; the son and the father; the son's fever, the father's unbelief. That operative word of our Saviour, *Thy son liveth*, was not without the intention of a trial. For had not the Ruler gone home satisfied with that intimation of his son's life and recovery, neither of them had been blessed with success. But now, the news of its performance meets him one half of the way; and he that believed somewhat ere he came, and more when he went, grew to more faith in the way. And, when he came home, he enlarged his faith to all the skirts of his family.' <sup>4</sup>

For thus the history concludes :

*And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. Observe, brethren; not only did the son begin to amend, but, at that hour, the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said*

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Hall.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 50.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Hall.

unto him, *Thy son liveth ; and himself believed, and his whole house.*<sup>5</sup>

On comparing the words, *Himself believed*, with the like expression in the fiftieth verse, we must evidently infer, not only that the Ruler assented to the words of the Lord, as having been uttered by a great prophet ; but that he immediately enrolled himself among Christ's disciples, and acknowledged him to be the Messiah. Nor was this all. For it was not only *himself* that *believed*, but *his whole house*. And when we consider, brethren, how beneficial and how extensive must have been the consequences, resulting from the conversion of this Ruler's family, we cannot be surprised that the evangelist should have selected this instance, as one of the memorable effects of the power, and tender compassion, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, the evangelist declares the peculiar importance which he attached to this miracle, by saying ;

*This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee :<sup>6</sup> or, as the sense of the original might otherwise be expressed, " This second miracle wrought Jesus in Galilee, when he came thither again from Judea."*

We have seen, brethren, that our Lord had

<sup>5</sup> Verses 51—53.

<sup>6</sup> Verse 54.

performed miracles, while at Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> But this was the second miracle which had been wrought in Galilee. It is evident, therefore, that it is to be placed, in the order of the history, before those which are recorded by St. Matthew.<sup>8</sup> And, consequently, the passage before us harmonises with that in St. Luke,<sup>9</sup> where we are informed that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," and that "there went out a fame of him through all the region round about." This fame of our Lord would, of course, be promoted by the miraculous cure of the Ruler's son. And thus we see how the history of this miracle tends to illustrate the important fact, which our evangelist has, everywhere, so clearly established, of the abundant revelation of Christ's mediatorial glory. For, in recording this second journey of our Lord, St. John has shown that there was not any one region of Palestine, in which our Lord did not plainly manifest his glory, as the Saviour of the world.

<sup>7</sup> Chap. ii.<sup>8</sup> Matt. iv. 23.<sup>9</sup> Luke iv. 14.

## SECTION XVII.

## CHAP. V. VER. 1—14.

JESUS HEALETH THE IMPOTENT MAN AT THE POOL  
OF BETHESDA.

The other three evangelists had enlarged on the things which our Saviour had said and done in Galilee, in the second year of his public ministry. St. John, therefore, now calls our attention to another journey, which, in the course of that time, our Lord had taken to Jerusalem, but of which we do not find any mention in the three other gospels. And, from this relation of our Lord's journey to Jerusalem, we learn, brethren, that, although, by reason of the hatred and malice of the pharisees, he had before withdrawn himself from Judea, and had exercised his public ministry chiefly in Galilee, yet, in the midst of his labours in Galilee, he had again repaired to Jerusalem, in order that he might afford another demonstration of his glory to its ungrateful inhabitants.

*After this there was a feast of the Jews ; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*<sup>1</sup>

Here the evangelist tells us, not only generally, that it was *after* the things mentioned in the preceding chapter, and that with a sufficiently long interval, to allow for the facts recorded by St. Luke ;<sup>2</sup> but also, more specifically, at *a feast of the Jews*, that *Jesus went up to Jerusalem*. And that this *feast of the Jews*, here mentioned, was the passover, is the generally received opinion, confirmed by the early authority of Irenæus. We find it designated in a similar manner in the other Gospels ;<sup>3</sup> and, in one passage, it is emphatically described, in the original, with the definite article, as “ THE feast.”

And may we not suppose, brethren, that, in thus *going up to the Jerusalem* at the *feast* of the passover, our Lord desired not only again to “ manifest forth his glory ”<sup>4</sup> before the unbelieving Jews, but also to remove every cause of offence from the Galilean converts, by showing that he observed the great ordinances of the law, and that he was prepared, on all fit occasions, to show himself openly to the Jews.

‘ Yes,’ says Bishop Hall, ‘ I find two silken cords that drew him up thither ; the one, his

<sup>1</sup> Verse 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Luke iv. v. and vi.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi. 5 ; Mark xv. 6 ; Luke xxiii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Chap. ii. 11.

obedience; the other, his desire of manifesting his glory.'

'It was a general law, that all males must appear thrice a year before the Lord. Now, in Jesus, we behold the very God whom they went up to worship at the feast: yet he himself goes up to worship there. As he had said to the Baptist, "It became him to fulfil all righteousness;"<sup>5</sup> and he will not abate his Father one ceremony. It was dangerous to go up to that Jerusalem, which he had left before for the malice of its inhabitants: yet now he will *go up* again. His obedience, indeed, drew him up, afterwards, to that bloody feast, wherein himself was sacrificed: how much more now, that he might sacrifice? And what can we plead, then, to have learned of Christ, if not his first lesson, obedience? The same proclamation that Gideon made to Israel, the Lord makes still to us; "Look on me, and do likewise: as I do, so shall ye do."<sup>6</sup>

'The second motive was, the manifestation of his glory. Yes; He that, sometimes, modestly steals a miracle with a "See thou tell no man,"<sup>7</sup> that no man might know it; at other times, does

<sup>5</sup> Matt. iii. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Judges vii. 17.

<sup>7</sup> In all these cases there were particular reasons for privacy. Otherwise, the rule was, to do all in public. See John xviii. 20.

wonders upon the scaffold of the world, that no man might be ignorant, and bids proclaim it on the house-tops. He, therefore, that would be crucified at the feast, that his death and resurrection might be more famous, will, at the feast, also do miracles, that his divine power might be approved openly. For Christ, saith Bernard, is 'the flower of the field, not of the garden.' And, in like manner, he that would do notable service to God, must do it conspicuously. Nicodemus gained well by Christ, but Christ got nothing by him, so long as, like a night-bird, he never came to him but with owls and bats. Then did he begin to be a profitable disciple, when he durst oppose the Pharisees in their condemnation of Christ, though indefinitely; but most, when, in the night of His death, the light of his faith brought him openly to take down the sacred corpse before all the gazing multitude, and to embalm it.'

*Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude<sup>s</sup> of impotent folk, of blind, halt, wither-*

<sup>s</sup> 'Truly it was a sorrowful sight to see, in such a multitude of men, a manifold deformity of members. Yet the glory of God did more clearly shine there, than in the beholding of a great and well-ordered army. For there is nothing more famous and excellent than when the power of

*ed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went<sup>9</sup> down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.<sup>1</sup>*

It would seem, brethren, from the history before us, as if, after having withdrawn the visible symbols of his presence, the God of Israel had graciously vouchsafed this standing miracle, in testimony that he had not withdrawn his favour from his people. And how admirably was it adapted to excite the attention of the Jews, and to prefigure the accomplishment of the great work of redemption! The time was now at hand when "the fountain was to be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."<sup>2</sup> And it was, therefore, providentially ordered that a work so full of wonder and of love, should have such a precursor to give notice of its approach. Accordingly, the waters which, originally, only had power to cleanse, were now, *at certain sea-*

God doth amend and restore the wants of nature. And there is nothing more beautiful and sweet than when, of his infinite goodness, he helpeth the miseries of man.'—*Calvin.*

<sup>9</sup> 'The use of the past tense would seem to authorise the conclusion that the miraculous use of the water had ceased before this gospel was written.—*Bengel.*

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 2—4.

Zech. xiii. 1.



sons, endued also with power to heal; that so they might aptly prefigure and introduce that true and living fountain of blood, which, and which only, is able to heal all the spiritual diseases of our corrupted nature. And may we not add, also, that the descending angel was a remarkable emblem of Him, "the Angel of the covenant," who was to descend from his throne of glory, and to 'humble himself, even to the death upon the cross, for us, miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death; that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life.'<sup>3</sup>

*And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.*<sup>4</sup>

'And how great a mercy,' exclaims Richard Baxter, 'to have been thirty-eight years under God's wholesome discipline! O my God! I thank thee for the like discipline for fifty-eight years. For how safe is this, in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure!' This circumstance of the long duration of the disease, thus noticed by the evangelist, is well suited, brethren, to illustrate the greatness of the power about to be exercised in its cure, and, at the same time, to shadow forth the sufficiency of divine grace even for those whose souls are the most deeply stained with the pollution of sin.

<sup>3</sup> *The Office of the Holy Communion.*

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 5.

*When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? <sup>5</sup>*

By saying, *Wilt thou be made whole?* our Lord might have sought to excite the faith of the poor impotent man, and to afford him an opportunity for declaring whether he looked for help to one so lowly and so despised as himself, whose fame, however, might have reached his ears. Thus much, at least, is certain, that the question must have tended to renew, in the man, a stronger sense of his impotent state, and to awaken a more earnest desire to be healed of his infirmity. But is it not an awful proof of our fallen state, that when these words are addressed to the soul, it should turn a deaf ear to the gracious invitation? Yes, brethren, if we would understand the malignity of that corruption which overspreads the soul, we must consider that it is the will itself which is diseased; and, alas! so diseased, that it loves to have it so, and refuses to be healed. As it is so truly described in our tenth Article: Our condition is such, that ‘we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.’<sup>6</sup> And it follows, therefore, that were

<sup>5</sup> Verse 6.

<sup>6</sup> Art. x.

our perverse and rebellious wills left to follow their own devices, the diseases of our souls could never be removed. But, blessed be God, he can bend the stubborn will of man to a conformity with his own; and, through the power of divine grace, he can make his people earnestly desire and thankfully receive the remedy which he has graciously promised to bestow.

*The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.*<sup>7</sup>

The poor man's mild, and gentle, and unrepining answer, seems to bespeak a heart softened and improved under the chastening hand of his God. And, accordingly,

*Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.*<sup>8</sup>

The evangelist here tells us, that the above miraculous cure was performed on the Sabbath day. And it must have been evident, therefore, to all who witnessed it, that our Lord assumed the power of a prophet. For, arguing from the case of Joshua, who surrounded Jericho seven successive days with the ark, the Jews held that a prophet of the Lord was empowered to infringe

<sup>7</sup> Verse 7.

<sup>8</sup> Verses 8, 9.

the outward rest of the Sabbath. It was fitting, moreover, that he who, as the true Noah, came to give rest to the weary and heavy laden, should often<sup>9</sup> perform, on the Sabbath, those works of mercy, which, while they removed bodily diseases and infirmities, were, at the same time, affecting emblems of the still greater mercy in store for the souls of believers, when they shall enter into that eternal rest which remaineth for them hereafter.

But, on this as on every other occasion, the Jews closed their eyes and their hearts against the admission of the light which surrounded them, and showed, by their language to the man, and by their subsequent behaviour toward our Lord, that, under a pretended regard for the sanctity of the Sabbath, they were resolved still to resist the authority, and to misrepresent the actions of Him, who had so plainly proved himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath.

*The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath-day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?*<sup>1</sup>

Observe the emphatic manner, in which the

<sup>9</sup> See Luke xiii. xiv., and John ix.

<sup>1</sup> Verses 10—12.

man expresses himself: *He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.* It is as if he had said, How can I do otherwise than obey the words of Him, to whom I am indebted for this wonderful cure? For, assuredly. He who could thus at once recover me from the bodily infirmity, under which I have been labouring for thirty-eight years, *the same* must have been exercising an authority beyond all dispute, when, on the Sabbath-day, after bidding me *rise*, he said to me, at the same time, to show the perfectness of the cure, *Take up thy bed and walk.* But this simple and unanswerable appeal only served to elicit a still more awful exhibition of the invincible malice and hatred of the Jews. For, instead of instituting an inquiry, such as naturally would have suggested itself to every unprejudiced mind, respecting the fact of the miraculous cure, they restricted the question simply to that, which, according to their traditional glosses upon the fourth commandment, might serve to afford ground for calumniating Jesus, and said, *What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?*

*And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterwards Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou*

*art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*<sup>2</sup>

In these words, our Lord seems to say to the man whom he had made whole, and, through him, to every one whose bodily infirmities have been healed, or whose life has been saved from destruction: Thou knowest why God laid this heavy chastisement upon thee. All the diseases and infirmities of the body are so many different symptoms of that deadly disease of the soul, which sin brought into the world. Now, therefore, that thou art healed of thy bodily disease, which was a constant memorial of thy sinful state, be upon thy guard against all those sinful and corrupt affections, which need so severe a discipline. Nay, more than this, pray that thou mayest have grace to *sin no more*. Since thou art *made whole* in thy body, pray continually for that simplicity of heart and integrity of spirit, which shall enable thee to serve God, with a perfect heart and a willing mind, all the days of thy life. Pray that thou mayest not think, or say, or do, anything contrary to the will of God. Pray that thou mayest have grace to walk in all God's commandments and ordinances blameless. In one word, pray that, under a deep and increasing sense of the loving-kindness of Him, who hath made thy BODY WHOLE, thou mayest devote thy-

<sup>2</sup> Verses 13, 14.

self WHOLLY, in heart and deed, to his service, and mayest 'walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life.'<sup>3</sup>

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## SECTION XVIII.

CHAP. V. ver. 15—30.

OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE CAVILS OF THE JEWS.

### FIRST PART.

*The man departed, says the evangelist, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.*<sup>1</sup>

And we may well believe that it was the fullness of a grateful heart, which led this poor man to communicate the above intelligence to the Jews. For it is worthy of remark that he does not speak of Jesus, as having commanded him to "take up his bed," though the Jews had perversely laid hold of that circumstance as a ground of accusation against our Lord; but, *it was Jesus*, he says, *which had made him whole*.

Now mark the spirit with which the Jews received this declaration.

<sup>3</sup> *The General Thanksgiving,*

<sup>1</sup> Verse 15.

*And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day.*<sup>2</sup>

The evangelist does not relate in what manner this *persecution* was carried on against Jesus, or when and where the charge was preferred against him. Some conjecture that the Jews might have met and spoken to him in the temple. Others, from considering the scope of the thirty-third verse, are of opinion that the members of the great council, whom our evangelist frequently denotes by the general term, *the Jews*, had summoned Jesus before them, that he might answer to the charge preferred against him. And, certainly, the latter conjecture gives additional dignity and force to the important discourse which occupies the remaining part of this chapter.

The charge was, that our Lord had *done these things on the Sabbath-day*.

*But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.*<sup>3</sup>

And, assuredly, brethren, our Lord's words do most fully declare that he is *equal with God*. For he says, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I*

<sup>2</sup> Verse 16.

<sup>3</sup> Verses 17, 18.



*work.* The Father and the Son had rested, indeed, on the seventh day, after finishing the work of creation. But they had been *working* together on each returning Sabbath, as well as on every other day, in carrying on the great works of providence and grace. And had not the Jews been utterly ignorant of the blessed mystery of redemption, they would have understood that the Father and Son must still continue thus to *work*, until all the chosen people of God shall obtain their 'perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul,'<sup>4</sup> in one eternal and everlasting sabbath above. For the sabbaths which we now enjoy, brethren, are to be regarded as the foretastes of that full and perfect "rest," which "remaineth to the people of God."<sup>5</sup> And if so, where or what would be these sabbaths themselves, unless *the Father and the Son* were still *working* together, on those blessed days, causing the sun to rise upon the earth, and sending down upon the hearts of assembled worshippers the healthful spirit of their grace?

But the Jews, instead of pondering in their hearts the solemn and important truth, which the words of our Lord were intended to convey, were filled with rage, and *sought the more to kill him*, because he had thus *made himself equal with God*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Burial Service.*<sup>5</sup> Heb. iv. 9.

*Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.<sup>6</sup>*

That is; Be not angry because I have performed this miracle of healing on the sabbath-day. For know that, in this as in every other instance, the Father is working with me. Know that my union with him, in nature, operation, and design, is such, that I can do nothing separately from him, but that I always act in one and the same work with the Father, and exercise the same divine power and authority that he does. And learn, therefore, against whom it is that you are thus filled with rage, and whose work it is you are thus blaspheming.

Brethren, as we proceed with this gospel, we shall find that our Lord frequently employs similar language, to denote the intimate union of nature and counsel between himself and the Father; and that, in like manner, he declares, with respect to the Holy Spirit, that “he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.”<sup>7</sup> But lest the Jews should suppose that, in thus speaking, he had claimed for himself more than was really due, he proceeds to support the above declaration by two

<sup>6</sup> Verse 19.

<sup>7</sup> Chap. xvi. 13.

arguments; the one, to the end of the thirtieth verse, taken from the relation subsisting between the Father and the Son; the other, which terminates at the thirty-seventh verse, taken from outward testimonies.

In the passage, therefore, which falls, at present, under our consideration, Jesus unfolds the counsel of peace between the Father and himself, respecting the great work of redemption. And this he does, first, in general terms, saying,

*For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.<sup>8</sup>*

And having thus referred, both to a present and a future demonstration of the Father's love to himself, our Lord, in the following verses, enlarges, first,<sup>9</sup> on the works which he was then performing, and, secondly,<sup>1</sup> on the works which were to be performed afterwards.

*For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so, the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment<sup>2</sup> unto the Son: that all*

<sup>8</sup> Verse 20.    <sup>9</sup> See verses 21—24.    <sup>1</sup> See verses 25—29.

<sup>2</sup> 'Whenever we consider the government of the world, the estate of our own souls, and the heavenly aid of our salvation, we should turn our eyes unto Christ alone, to whom all power is committed, and in whose face God the Father shineth, lest the unveiled Majesty of God should swallow us up with its infinite brightness.'—*Calvin*.

*men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life.*<sup>3</sup>

When our Lord speaks, in the twenty-first verse, of *raising up the dead*, we may understand him as referring both to the wonderful works which he was then performing, in actually restoring the dead to life ; and, also, to that spiritual resurrection of the soul, from a death of sin to a life of righteousness, which was so remarkably shadowed forth by those miraculous restorations to natural life. There would appear, however, to be a more especial reference to the spiritual resurrection of the soul ; because, in the three following verses, our Lord is plainly describing the exercise of his mediatorial office, in distinguishing between the good and the bad by the operations of his grace, as the prelude of that separation which he will hereafter make, when he cometh to judge the world. Viewed in this light, therefore, the verses may be thus paraphrased : *As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so I, with equal power and*

<sup>3</sup> Verse 21—24.

sovereignty, not only restore to natural life, whenever I please, but also *quicken* those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and bestow upon them everlasting life. For the Father has not reserved for himself, nor does he exercise immediately by himself, either the present work of redemption, or the future judgment of the world. But he *hath committed all judgment unto the Son*; that, instead of being offended at his deep humiliation, men might be induced, by his bearing and executing this high commission, a commission which could be borne and executed only by a Divine Being, *to honour the Son even as they honour the Father*. Indeed, *he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him*. But happy is that man who thus honoureth the Son, and receiveth his word. For *verily, verily*, says Jesus, *he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*.

But our Lord had spoken of still *greater works*, to be performed afterwards. And, accordingly, in the twenty-fifth and four following verses, he describes these *greater works*, which had been so remarkably shadowed forth by all his deeds of mercy on the bodies of men; pointing, in the first place, to the extension of the Gospel, after

his Resurrection and Ascension; and, in the second place, to the general Resurrection at the last day.

The spreading of the Gospel among the Gentiles is thus described in the twenty-fifth and two following verses:

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.*<sup>4</sup>

Our Lord had said, at the twenty-fourth verse, respecting every one that should *believe on him that sent him*, that he is *passed from death unto life*. And when he goes on, therefore, so solemnly to declare that *the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live*; he evidently looks forward to the calling into his church, of the Gentiles, whom the apostle so emphatically describes as having been “*dead in trespasses and sins.*”<sup>5</sup> For, even as the Father has life essentially and necessarily in himself, and communicates life to every living creature, so has he constituted his essentially living Son, a “*quickening Spirit,*”<sup>6</sup> full of life in himself as Mediator,

<sup>4</sup> Verses 25—27.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. ii. 1.

1 Cor. xv. 45.

and has authorised him to communicate that life to others. And when our Lord adds, that the Father *hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man*, we must understand him as thus describing the exercise of the power which he possesses, as “Head over all things to the church,”<sup>7</sup> to “execute judgment and justice on the earth,”<sup>8</sup> by making some partakers of *everlasting life*, and by leaving others under *condemnation*.<sup>9</sup>

And *marvel not at this*, continues Jesus, *for the hour is coming*; but, observe, he does not here, as in the twenty-fifth verse, say, *and now is* because the day was not yet at hand, *in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good*,<sup>1</sup> unt-

<sup>7</sup> Eph. i. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Jer. xxiii. 5.

<sup>9</sup> See verse 24, with ch. iii. 18 and 36.

<sup>1</sup> ‘There was never any in the world, who, without pardon, can be judged to have lived well. Yea, there shall no work at all be accounted a good work, save that whose faults God doth pardon; seeing that man’s works are all imperfect and corrupt. Therefore, they are called, in this place, *doers* of good works, whom St. Paul calleth “zealous” of the same. (Tit. ii. 14.) And this estimation dependeth altogether upon the fatherly mercifulness of God. The Papists do gather out of these places, that everlasting life is repaid unto the merit of works. But this is easily refuted. For Christ doth not here treat of the cause of salvation; but he doth only distinguish believers from unbelievers by their

*the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*<sup>2</sup>

Our Lord is here plainly speaking of the general resurrection at the last day, as contradistinguished from the spiritual resurrection, referred to in the twenty-fifth and two following verses. For there he employs the present ; here the future tense. There, also, he speaks only of the *dead*, i. e. the “ dead in trespasses and sins ;” while here he makes express mention of the *graves*, to show that he is describing those, whose bodies are resting in the tomb, until *his voice* shall be heard, and all *shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

Nothing now remained, but that, before our Lord entered upon the subject of external testimony, he should again solemnly declare how entire was the union between the Father and himself, in all the operations, past, present, and future, connected with the work of redemption.

mark. And this he doth, that he may exhort and invite his children unto holiness and purity. Indeed, we do not deny that the faith which justifieth us, is inseparably joined with that holy obedience, which consists in living well and righteously. But we only teach, that our hope can rest nowhere else, save only in THE MERCY OF GOD.—*Calvin.*

<sup>2</sup> Verses-28, 29.



Repeating, therefore, with fresh emphasis, by passing from the third to the first person, the words which he had used at the beginning of this present argument, our Lord says,

*I can of mine ownself do nothing. After which he thus proceeds; As I hear I judge: and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*<sup>3</sup>

That is; In all these things I neither do, nor can do, anything separately from my Father. For, in all my administrations, I proceed as one perfectly acquainted with his counsels, and as his Messiah, sent and instructed by him. And my whole rule and government must necessarily be perfectly right, because I therein neither aim at, nor pursue, any private will of my own, different from, or opposite to, the will of my Father; but I exactly discharge the commission which he hath given me, in sending me into the world.

Brethren, may we have grace to ponder in our hearts the solemn and important truth which have been brought before us. Since the Father has indeed *committed all judgment unto the Son*; that all men should honour the Son, *even as they honour the Father*, may we learn to honour Him, by hearing and obeying that voice which, as soon as it is uttered, can "make a whole." And may we show that we have heard

<sup>3</sup> Verse 30.

his voice, by “arising” from the death of sin, and by “walking”<sup>4</sup> before him in newness of life. For, *verily, verily*, says Jesus, *he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but IS PASSED from death unto life.*

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## SECTION XIX.

### CHAP. V. ver. 31—38.

OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE CAVILS OF THE JEWS.

#### SECOND PART.

In that part of our Lord's discourse which formed the subject of the last section, He strengthened and supported his declaration as to his working with the Father, and doing the things which the Father doeth, by describing the relation between the Father and himself. In the portion which we are now to consider, he confirms the same declaration by an argument taken from outward testimonies. For, although the truths which he had been uttering were, in

<sup>4</sup> See Verse 8.

themselves, sufficient to establish his cause, yet they were beyond the comprehension of the Jews, who could not discern, in the lowly appearance of Jesus, the power which was to be exercised in the great work of redemption, and who were not disposed to await its future demonstration. Our Lord proceeds, therefore, to direct their attention to testimonies which were then before them, and which were suited to produce conviction in their minds. And if the preceding argument was peculiarly adapted to strengthen and to elevate the faith of the believer, the latter was admirably calculated to silence the daring objections of the unbeliever, and to "sweep away the refuge of lies." <sup>1</sup>

Before our Lord enters upon these testimonies he shows, by a prefatory remark, how he accommodates himself to our finite understanding, by employing such an argument as we ourselves should use in our dealings with each other.

*If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.* <sup>2</sup>

When our Lord says, in the thirty-first verse that *if he bore witness of himself*, his testimony would not be *true*, we are to understand, according to the idiom of the original, that it would not

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxviii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Verses 31, 32.

be regarded as worthy of belief, or as being established by suitable evidence. We may suppose, therefore, that our Lord is here expressing the thoughts of the Jews, who, when they heard Jesus uttering the above solemn and mysterious truths, probably entertained in their minds the very same scruple which, on a subsequent<sup>3</sup> occasion, they expressed in words. It is, therefore, as if Jesus had said: ‘I know your thoughts, viz. that the things which I say are not to be considered as worthy of belief, because *I bear witness of myself*. For you regard me as a mere man, whose testimony, under such circumstances, is not to be received.’ Now, although he might easily have refuted this, their perverse judgment, as, on the occasion above referred to, we shall find him actually doing, yet he is content, at present, to argue with his hearers on their own ground, that so he might the more effectually convince them. He says, therefore, *There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true*. Who that witness is, brethren, is plainly declared to us at the thirty-sixth verse;<sup>4</sup> and most emphatically might our Lord say of him, *I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true*. Indeed, all men may well say that God cannot lie, and therefore “his record is true.”<sup>5</sup> But

<sup>3</sup> See chap. viii. 13, 14.<sup>4</sup> See also chap. viii. 18.<sup>5</sup> Chap. viii. 14.

Jesus Christ here says, in a more peculiar sense, *I KNOW that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true*; because he is acquainted with the whole counsel of peace between them both; and “what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth.”<sup>6</sup>

In referring to the testimonies which had been given to the Jews, our Lord begins with the lowest, viz. the earthly testimony, which yet was, of itself, amply sufficient to convince the Jews; and he then ascends to the highest, viz. the testimony which came from heaven.

The earthly testimony to our Lord is thus described in the following verses:

*Yesent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.*<sup>7</sup>

Our Lord here reminds the Jews, how they themselves had *sent* to John the Baptist, to make inquiry; so that he was referring them to the very evidence which they themselves had sought, and on which they had virtually professed themselves willing to rely. The respect shown to the Baptist by the embassy sent from the council at Jerusalem, plainly demonstrated the light in which the Baptist was regarded by them; and it followed, therefore, that no earthly testimony greater than his could possibly be adduced. *But.*

<sup>6</sup> Chap. iii. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Verse 33—35.

continues Jesus, *I receive not testimony from man.* That is, Our Lord did not depend on the testimony of man, as if it could establish his Divine or Mediatorial character. For, as the sun cannot derive light from a lamp, even so the light of the world cannot be exhibited in additional splendour by the united testimony of saints and angels. It is true, indeed, that the Baptist was sent “to bear witness of the light;”<sup>8</sup> and that Jesus afterwards said to his apostles, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”<sup>9</sup> But still our Lord only employed this testimony as an instrument, to prepare the way for the Gospel. For that Gospel is, itself, to be RECEIVED INTO THE HEARTS of his people, not by virtue of any outward testimony, but on account of the intrinsic power of the truths which are thus attested, and which commend themselves to the heart and conscience of the awakened penitent. Our Lord, therefore, mentions this testimony of the Baptist, not as if it could establish his own Divine or Mediatorial character; but because he would reason with the Jews on their own principles, and would omit nothing which might tend to their conviction and salvation. *These things I say, that ye might be saved.* For their salvation lay so near to his heart, that he was willing to employ

<sup>8</sup> Chap. i. 7.<sup>9</sup> Acts i. 8.

those means, which were best adapted to remove the prejudices and awaken the attention of his hearers, and thus to open the way for that vital and experimental faith, with which only man believeth to the saving of his soul.

Our Lord says, of the Baptist, that *he was a burning and a shining light*. That is; He had been a *burning* light; for he had been filled himself with a sacred ardour and with an unwearied zeal for the truth, for the glory of God, and for the salvation of sinners. He had been a *shining light*; for he had been *shining*, in the active discharge of his ministry, for the benefit of others. And yet, how had they received him? They had been *willing*, indeed, *for a season to rejoice in his light*. For, at the beginning of his ministry, "there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan."<sup>1</sup> But when he began to preach repentance; to rebuke their corrupt lives; to show the erroneous nature of their expectations respecting himself, and to point to Jesus as the Messiah, they ceased to *rejoice in his light*. They would have rejoiced to acknowledge him as their leader, who would have beckoned them on to worldly grandeur and honour; but they were not prepared to welcome him as the forerunner of Christ; because they were not prepared to come to the only

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 5.

Fountain of light and life, but “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”<sup>2</sup>

Having thus reasoned with the Jews on their own principles, and shown that the evidence which they had rejected was the very evidence which they themselves had sought, and on which, therefore, they had virtually professed themselves willing to rely, our Lord now passes on to a testimony higher far than that of the Baptist, even a testimony from heaven.

*But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.*<sup>3</sup>

In thus describing the *works* which bear witness of him, as *works which the Father hath given him to finish*, our Lord shows that he is here referring to the works which relate to his Mediatorial office, and which were foretold by the prophets as characteristic of the promised Messiah. These works had been *given* by the Father to Jesus, that he should *finish them*. And, therefore, if the Jews now beheld, in the removal of the bodily diseases, and in the conversion<sup>4</sup> of the

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Verses 36, 37.

<sup>4</sup> The conversion of the soul, though, in *ITSELF*, an



souls of men, the actual commencement of such works, they should have been led, in faith and in prayer, to expect the ultimate consummation of all those wonderful and gracious works, by which Jesus had already proved, before their eyes, that *the Father had sent him*. It is true, indeed, that, in one view, these works might be regarded as the Son's testimony of himself; for his language is, respecting them, *the same works THAT I DO*. But, in another view, they were to be regarded as the testimony of the Father; both because the Spirit of the Father had plainly revealed them by the prophets, and because He only could have performed them, in whom the Spirit of the Father dwelt. For they were divine works; such as could not have been *given* to the Son *to finish*, unless he had been one with the *Father*, in the power of the Divine Majesty. And, therefore, if one of the Pharisees, on seeing the miraculous cures of bodily diseases, was compelled to admit that "no man could do them, except God was with him;"<sup>5</sup> and if the same argument was

inward work, is, in its FRUITS, the strongest of all testimonies to the power of divine grace. For what power, other than divine, can change the heart of stone into the heart of flesh? Moreover, it plainly declares the end of all signs, viz. that sinners should turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

<sup>5</sup> Chap. iii. 2.

afterwards used against that body, by the man to whom our Lord had given sight,<sup>6</sup> with what peculiar emphasis might it be affirmed, with regard to ALL the mighty works which Jesus performed, as being the conclusion to be inevitably drawn from them, that they were works which *the FATHER had given him to finish.*

But this was not all. Our Lord could speak, not only of the mediate, but of the immediate testimony which he had received from the Father. Accordingly he adds, *And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.* And, by thus passing from the present to the past tense,<sup>7</sup> our Lord plainly shows that he is referring to the immediate testimony which the Father had borne to him, at his baptism in the river Jordan, when there was a “voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>8</sup>

The sufficiency of the testimonies which had been given, prepares the way for the charge of incredulity which our Lord now proceeds to fix upon the Jews.

*Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See chap. ix. 32, 33.

<sup>7</sup> The change is from μαρτυρεῖ, in ver. 36, to μεμαρτυρηκε, in ver. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. iii. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Verse 37, 38.

Our Lord had produced two divine testimonies; the one, a mediate testimony, arising out of the *works which the Father had given him to finish*, and which exactly corresponded with the distinguishing marks of the Messiah, as described by the prophets; the other, an immediate testimony from heaven, borne by the Father at his baptism. Taking up these proofs, therefore, in an inverse order, our Lord shows the incredulity of the Jews, first, with respect to the latter; and, then, with respect to the former of these testimonies.

*Ye have neither heard his voice*, he says, *at any time, nor seen his shape*. Now, it is evident, from the connexion in which the words are found, that *hearing* and *seeing*, are here to be understood, according to a common idiom of scripture, in the sense of *obeying* and *regarding*. Our Lord describes it, therefore, as the general characteristic of the Jews, that they had not listened, *at any time*, either in that, or in any preceding generations, to the *voice*, or the command of God. *Neither*, says Jesus, *had they seen his shape*. Now the Greek word for *shape*<sup>1</sup> is applied, in the Septuagint, to the visible symbol of God, which appeared in the cloud, and which rested on the tabernacle. And the same word is employed by St. Luke, when he describes the Holy Spirit, as

<sup>1</sup> εἶδος. See Numb. xii. 8; and ix. 15, 16.

appearing, like a dove, at our Lord's baptism.<sup>2</sup> Our Lord means to say, therefore, that they had not, *at any time*, paid attention to, or regarded the symbol, or appearance of God, which, repeatedly, under the Old Testament dispensation, and, lately, at his own baptism, had been so graciously vouchsafed to them.

And as the Jews had manifested incredulity with respect to one testimony, so had they also with respect to the other. *They had not* God's word *abiding in them*, says Jesus; *for whom he sent, him they believed not.* Our Lord's language plainly implies that, so far from heartily believing in his name, they had not even received the testimony which he had borne by his works, to prove that he had been *sent* by the Father. And if they *believed* not that testimony; if they would not even listen to the testimony which he bore, when regarded simply as an ambassador to them from the Father; how much less was it to be expected that they would *believe* in him, by a true and lively and *abiding* faith, as the Saviour of the world.

Brethren; if we would thus *believe* in the Lord Jesus, to the saving of the soul, we must pray that the word of God may be not only among us, but within us; not only shining in our eyes, and sounding in our ears, but also ruling

<sup>2</sup> Luke iii. 22.

in our souls. We must pray that our hearts may be the tabernacle, in which, as in the sanctuary of old, the word of God may be continually *abiding*. Yea, beloved, let his word be our counsellor to direct us in all difficulties and all trials; let it be a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path; and let it be the food of our souls, to sustain and to refresh them, when we are weary; and we shall then be enabled to pass through the wilderness of this weary world, still *abiding* in the Lord Jesus, and still holding forth the word of life, amidst the darkness which surrounds us. And, having thus looked continually to Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith, we shall “rejoice in the day of Christ that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” <sup>3</sup>

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## SECTION XX.

CHAP. V. ver. 39—47.

OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE CAVILS OF THE JEWS.

THIRD PART.

We have seen the insufficiency of mere outward testimony, even of the highest and most

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 16.

overpowering character, to awaken the heart of the sinner. We have also seen that, unless we have the “word” of God “abiding” in us, we shall never know what it is rightly to believe in Him, whom the Father has sent, to redeem our life from destruction, and to crown us with loving kindness and tender mercies. And, if our hearts have been fully impressed with the importance of these truths, we shall now be the better prepared to listen to the words of our Saviour’s exhortation :

*Search the scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.*<sup>1</sup>

It is plain, from the words of the above exhortation, both that the Jews entertained, at that time, the belief of a future state, and also, that they regarded the scriptures as teaching the way to eternal blessedness. Our Lord, therefore, referring to these their expectations, now declares that this life is in himself: *Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.*

And yet, continues Jesus, *ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*<sup>2</sup>

Observe the full emphasis of this last clause, *that ye might have life*, when viewed in connexion with the words of the preceding verse. Our

<sup>1</sup> Verse 39.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 40.



Lord had already spoken of the Jews, as *thinking* that they had *eternal life in the scriptures*. And he here points out to them how, and how only, they might really *have eternal life*; viz. by *coming to him*, of whom those scriptures *testify*. But, alas! they *would not come to him, that they might have life*. And thus was the charge fully established, which our Lord had preferred against them, at the thirty-eighth verse. For, if they *would not come to Him*, of whom the *scriptures testified*, while yet they professed to venerate those scriptures, and to regard them as containing eternal life, it was plain that they did, in fact, reject the great leading truth set forth in those scriptures, and therefore that *the word of the Father was not abiding in them*.

But with whom did the blame of this rejection rest? It rested altogether with themselves; for it was not that they *could not*, but that they *would not come*. And is it not even thus, beloved, that our Lord appeals to sinners in every age; saying; *Ye WILL NOT come to me, that ye might have life*? Yes: whenever we refuse to *come to Christ*, the fault is wholly in our own wills. Though we all profess to desire *life*, and know that we may have it, if we will but come unto Christ, yet *we will not come unto him*. That is, according to the exact import of our Saviour's language,<sup>2</sup> We do not *choose*, or *will to come*. No; though the

<sup>2</sup> οὐ θέλετε εἰλθεῖν.

ternal Son of God hath purchased life for us with his own death, and calls upon us to come to him, yet we choose not, or will not to come; no, not for *life* itself. But, as the people of old, when God called upon them to leave their strange gods, and turn to him, answered, "No: for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;"<sup>3</sup> so it is at this day. Though the eternal God, our Saviour, calls upon us to leave this fleeting world, and *come* to him, that we may *live* and be happy for ever; we virtually answer, 'No: we have loved the world, and after it we will go.'

And yet, brethren, must we not all admit, when we consider the nature of the complaint made by Christ, *Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life*, that there is everything in it to encourage the sinful children of men to draw nigh to Him? It is the complaint of a person, who would be gracious to sinners; who would readily receive them; who delights to pardon sin, and to show mercy to offenders; and who deeply feels the want, on their part, of a suitable regard and attention to his offers. And does not everything, in the history and character of Jesus Christ, plainly show this to be the case? For what, but the most tender compassion for sinners, could have moved Him to leave his Father's throne, and to "take upon him the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of men,"

<sup>3</sup> Jer. ii. 25.



in order that he might "humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross?"<sup>4</sup> What, but such matchless pity, could have enabled him to suffer such indignities as he met with, or to suffer such a painful and ignominious death? And what does his whole character speak, but tenderness and love? Every miracle which he performed, was calculated to give as high an idea of his compassionate regard for man, as of his divine power. And, when we listen to his discourses, what do they breathe throughout, but a spirit of good will to man, of compassion for sinners, and of forbearance and long-suffering, as manifest, in every word, as his supreme regard for his Father's law?

In the sequel of the chapter, our Lord seems to meet and refute two objections, which he saw were suggesting themselves to the minds of the Jews, and under the shelter of which, they would be disposed to withstand, or to evade, the arguments which he had employed.

The first difficulty or exception in the minds of the Jews was this; viz. that, in thus reproving them for not coming to Him, that they *might have life*, Jesus appeared to consult his own glory, instead of desiring to lead them to the Father who had sent him. And this exception our Lord meets and refutes in the forty-first and three following verses.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 8.

*I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*<sup>5</sup>

Our Lord here plainly declares to the Jews, in answer to their evil surmises, that he would not receive any human applause, and that he did not seek any external pomp or grandeur; *I receive not honour from men.* And, having thus anticipated the charge which they were prepared to prefer against him, he goes on to retort it upon themselves, saying, *I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.* He knew that, notwithstanding all their high professions, they were quite destitute of the love of God, and that the love of the world was reigning in their hearts. And it followed, therefore, that it was a consciousness of their own perverseness, which led them to form such a judgment respecting Himself.

But, lest they should complain of the injustice of this charge, our Lord fully establishes its truth, by two arguments; the one derived from their treatment of those who came to them; the other, from their rule of conduct among themselves.

*I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive*

<sup>5</sup> Verses 41—44.

*me not* ; this is the first argument : *if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.* That is ; When, in accordance with the word of prophecy, *I am come in my Father's name*, acting by his authority, seeking his glory, and giving proof that I am sent by him, to effect a spiritual salvation from sin and death, *ye receive me not*, because I oppose your darling vices, and because I give you no ground to expect worldly riches, honour, power, or pleasure. But if any mere impostors shall come among you, to flatter you in your sins, and to promise you temporal deliverance, wealth, and grandeur, ye will readily entertain and follow them, to your own destruction.

But *how can ye believe, which receive honour one of another*, this is the second argument ; *and seek not the honour that cometh from God only!* In these words, our Lord shows them, not only that they were altogether destitute of the love of God, but that such love could not possibly obtain an entrance into their bosoms ; seeing that, in all their intercourse among themselves, they were influenced by a principle directly opposed to that heavenly grace : *How CAN ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*

My brethren, all unbelief is to be accounted for upon one of two principles ; either that there is not sufficient evidence to justify belief, or that

the mind is not in a fit state to receive the proper impression from that evidence. In the present instance, the former was clearly not the case: for the evidence was full and indisputable. The latter, therefore, was the true cause. The minds of the scribes and pharisees were not in a fit state to give due weight to the miracles performed by Jesus, or to pay a proper attention to the nature of the doctrines delivered by him, to appreciate their value, or to judge impartially of their origin. And the particular reason why their minds were thus indisposed, is assigned by our Lord: *they received honour one of another.* Their reputation amongst men was the chief object of their solicitude. And, therefore, they were eager to receive those opinions, which the world held in honour, and reluctant to embrace those, of which the reception was generally discreditable. The disciples of Jesus were, in general, not only of poor and mean condition, but considered, moreover, as fools and dupes by the wise, and opulent, and honourable of that day. And it was plain, therefore, that any one who was influenced by a love of reputation amongst his fellow men, COULD NOT believe in Jesus. It was morally impossible that he should. And observe, brethren; if so, it was equally impossible that the *love of God* should find entrance into his bosom. For what is faith in Jesus Christ,

but the love of God in Christ, according to the testimony of his Gospel?

Such was the manner, in which our Lord urged upon the Jews the solemn duty of self-examination, as to their governing rules of life. But, as he spoke, he well knew that another prejudice would arise in their minds; inasmuch as they would regard the severity of his reproofs, as inconsistent with the notions which they had formed of that Messiah, who was to come for the help and the consolation of Israel. Our Lord, therefore, in the remaining verses, not only answers this objection, but shows them how, in their opposition to himself, they were exposing themselves to the accusation of one, in whom they professed to trust.

*Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father, there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?*<sup>6</sup>

That is; Though I charge home your sins upon you for your conviction, I came, not that I might be your accuser, but that I might be a merciful Saviour and Advocate for every returning sinner. Nor need I turn your accuser; since Moses, by whose law ye expect to be saved, suf-

<sup>6</sup> Verses 45—47.

iciently indicts and condemns you for your unbelief and other wickedness. For, had ye believed his declarations, ye could not but have believed in Me; since all the types of the law, and the prophecies recorded by him, evidently point to, and are fulfilled only in Me. But if ye will not be convinced by the *writings* of him, for whom you profess so high a regard, *how SHALL YE believe the words* uttered by one, whom you openly treat with injury and contempt?

Our Lord's argument was unanswerable; and the Jews were placed by it in this dilemma. Either they *believed Moses*; and then their rejection of Christ was inexcusable: or they did *not believe Moses*; and then their rejection of Christ was incurable. For, if they would not weigh the import of those *writings*, which they professed to hold in such respect, and to which they might recur again and again; how could they wonder, if the *words*, which were uttered by a new teacher, should pass by their ears, as the wind, and be remembered no more?

Little, therefore, as the Jews suspected it, it was because they had not *believed Moses*, that they also *believed not in Him*, of whom Moses *wrote*. The writings of Moses were, indeed, in their hands; but, alas! a "veil was upon their hearts;"<sup>7</sup> so that they understood not the things

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 15.

which "Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write," concerning "Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>8</sup> In other words; They did not feel their need of salvation; and it was in vain, therefore, that Moses and the prophets had written of Him, who was to bruise the serpent's head. They *believed not Moses and his writings*; and therefore they *believed not Him*, of whom Moses *wrote*. But oh! my brethren, if they were "broken off" because of this "unbelief,"<sup>9</sup> shall not we take heed to ourselves, lest there be in us the same "evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God?"<sup>1</sup> Yea; let us pray that, the veil being removed from our hearts, we may all "with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> So shall we find, as we *search the scriptures*, that they everywhere *testify of Christ*, as being able and willing to "make us whole," and as working, together with the Father, for the justification, the sanctification, and the redemption of His people!

<sup>8</sup> Chap. i. 45.<sup>9</sup> Rom. xi. 20.<sup>1</sup> Heb. iii. 12.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.<sup>3</sup> Verse 11.

SECTION XXI.

CHAP. VI. VER. 1—15.

JESUS FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND.

Nothing is specifically recorded as to the effect produced on the Jews by the foregoing discourse, delivered by our Lord in answer to the charge which they had preferred against him, on the occasion of his healing the impotent man at Bethesda. We may infer, however, from the following chapter,<sup>1</sup> that it only tended to exasperate them the more against our Lord, insomuch that they sought to take away his life. But as he designed to lay the foundation of his kingdom more fully before he should leave the world and return to the Father, he deemed it necessary to withdraw himself from the fury of the Jews, and, more especially, from the persecuting hatred of the council at Jerusalem, during the greater part of his remaining ministry on earth. We find, therefore, that he remained absent from Judea for a year and a half, and that he prose-

<sup>1</sup> See chap. vii. 1, 19.



cuted his work, during this interval, in the more remote regions of Canaan.

But, in order to show that Jesus did not neglect, during this period, to manifest his glory, both by the works which he performed, and by the things which he said concerning his Mediatorial office, our evangelist introduces, in this chapter, a remarkable instance of each. For he first calls our attention to the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, by the sea of Tiberias; and he afterwards records the discourse, in which our Lord spake of himself as the bread of life to believers. The miracle itself had been related by the other three evangelists;<sup>2</sup> but the discourse to which it gave rise, had not yet been committed to writing. And we may conclude, therefore, that St. John selected this one transaction, out of the many remarkable events which had occurred during these eighteen months, partly on account of the intrinsic importance of the miracle, and partly on account of the copious and most important discourse which was afterwards delivered, and which had been passed over, in silence, by the other sacred historians.

In the first fifteen verses, St. John relates the manifestation of our Lord's glory beyond the sea of Galilee. And, in the sequel of the chapter, he relates how the same glory was manifested, both

<sup>2</sup> See Matt. xiv.; Mark vi.; Luke ix.

by word and deed, on his return. These things took place just before the third passover; being nearly a twelvemonth after the matters related in the preceding chapter. And, as the discourse, which forms so large a portion of this chapter, was delivered at Capernaum, we have, in the history before us, another strong proof of the obstinate and incurable incredulity of the Jews. For, next to Jerusalem, there was no city more called upon to believe in the Lord Jesus than Capernaum, where he resided and taught. And yet the inhabitants of that city continued impenitent and unbelieving.

The chapter opens with thus describing our Lord's visit to the country beyond the sea of Tiberias.

*After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*<sup>3</sup>

By the *miracles* mentioned in the second verse, we must understand all those wonderful works, which Jesus had performed since his return from Judea, and which consisted, for the most part, in the healing of *them that were diseased*. And I

<sup>3</sup> Verse 1—4.

notice this circumstance, because it is evident that St. John thus plainly presupposes, and thereby confirms, the narrative of the other evangelists.

St. John also mentions, that *the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh*. And it is certain, therefore, that the *multitude*, who were now *following Jesus*, would be continually increasing in numbers; inasmuch as the people would be flocking from all parts of the country, to keep this feast at Jerusalem. We may suppose, moreover, that St. John notices this circumstance with a special allusion to the following discourse, in which we are taught to regard our Lord, as the true anti-type of all the mystical food spoken of in the Old Testament. For He there describes himself, as "the living bread which came down from heaven," and as the very paschal Lamb, who was to "give his flesh for the life of the world."<sup>4</sup>

*When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (And this he said to prove him; for he himself knew what he should do.) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here which*

<sup>4</sup> Verse 51.

*with five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?*<sup>5</sup>

Both the disciples here mentioned, Philip and Andrew, were noticed in the first chapter, as having received an early invitation from our Lord to follow him. It is remarkable, also, that, in speaking of the latter, St. John here designates him again, in the very same manner, as *Simon Peter's brother*. And may we not conclude, therefore, that he thus intends, silently, but emphatically, to point out the blindness and perverseness of our Lord's disciples? seeing that even those who had been so graciously noticed by our Lord, at the very commencement of his ministry, and who had subsequently witnessed so many mighty works, were still so ignorant, and so "slow of heart to believe."<sup>6</sup>

*And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.*<sup>7</sup>

It is written,<sup>8</sup> brethren, that Elisha prophesied, in the name of the Lord, promising plenty to the people of Samaria, who were grievously afflicted with great famine. But a prince, in favour and authority with the king, replied against the man of God, and said; "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?"

<sup>5</sup> Verse 5—9.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xxiv. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Verse 10.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Kings vii.

It is written, again, that the same prophet sent a messenger to Naaman the Syrian, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."<sup>9</sup> But Naaman replied, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" And even such is the manner of all who are "wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight."<sup>1</sup> When they should obey God, they reason and dispute the matter with him, as if he knew not what he said or did. But not so with the multitude here assembled before our Lord. For, as soon as he issued his command, *the men sat down, in number about five thousand*; meekly and obediently disposing themselves, in separate companies, and looking up to Jesus for the food of which they stood in need.

And does not the ready obedience of this vast multitude inculcate a lesson upon us? 'All,' says Bishop Hall, 'who would be Christ's followers, must lead the life of faith. And, even where means appear not, still they must wait upon that merciful hand. Nothing is more easy than to trust God, when our barns and our coffers are full; and to say, "Give us our daily bread," when we have it in our cupboard. But, when

<sup>9</sup> 2 Kings v. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. v. 21.

we have nothing, and when we know not how or where to get anything, then to depend upon an invisible bounty; this is a true and noble act of faith. To cast away our own, indeed, that we may live immediately upon Divine Providence, I know no warrant. But when the necessity is of God's making, we see our refuge. And happy are we, if our confidence can fly to it, and rest on it. Yea, fulness would be a curse, if it should debar us of this dependence. For, at our best, we ought to look up to this great Householder of the world, and cannot but need his provision.'

*And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples,<sup>2</sup> and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.<sup>3</sup>*

On this occasion, as afterwards at the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus gave thanks. And, in so doing, he at once manifested his humility and his excellence. He manifested his humility, in thus honouring the Father, as the fountain of every blessing conferred on mankind, and in thus doing all his works "to the glory of

<sup>2</sup> 'Whereas he would have the bread, which was given to the disciples, to increase in their hands, we are hereby taught, that when one of us doth seek another's profit, the Lord doth bless our labours.'—*Calvin*.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 11.

God the Father.”<sup>4</sup> He manifested, at the same time, his own adorable perfections, by using the language, not of prayer, but of thanksgiving; as being fully conscious of his own Divine power and as being certain, therefore, of the event, which was now coming to pass.

The evangelist adds, that *when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples.* ‘And how fit a type is this,’ exclaims Bishop Hall, ‘of thy spiritual provision! For we are here plainly taught that thou, who couldst have fed the world by thine immediate word, wouldest yet, by the hands of thy ministers, divide the bread of life to all hearers! How strongly, also, was this declared to us under the law! For well did the Israelites see and hear, that thou couldst deliver that dreadful message with thine own mouth. And yet, in favour of their weakness, thou wouldest graciously treat with them by Moses.’

*When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten?*<sup>5</sup>

The command to *gather up the fragments*, which is omitted by the other evangelists, is here recorded by St. John, both to show the greatness

<sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Verses 12, 13.

of the miracle, and also to remind us that there should be no waste in any of the good things which God has provided for us. To borrow, once more, the admirable language of Bishop Hall: 'The feeding of the multitude was but the one half of the work, the other half was in the remnant. Of all other, it most concerns the successors of the apostles, to take care, that the marvellous works of their God and Saviour may be improved to the best. They may not suffer a crust or crumb to be lost, that may yield any glory to that Almighty agent. Nay; woe be to us, if we care only to gather up our own scraps, with neglect of the precious morsels of our Maker and Redeemer.'

*Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*<sup>6</sup>

Here we have the sequel of the miracle, both as it respects our Lord, and the multitude.

With regard to the latter; St. John tells us that *those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.* And that the

<sup>6</sup> Verses 14, 15.



multitude intended thus to designate Jesus, as the Messiah, we may infer, not only from their describing him, as the *prophet that should come into the world*, a phrase emphatically applied among them to the promised Messiah ; but also from the desire which they manifested to accomplish what they regarded as the scope of the prophetic scriptures, *by making him a king*.

But when Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. We are here told that He, "whose kingdom is not of this world,"<sup>7</sup> immediately withdrew himself from them, and thus frustrated their design. It is also particularly mentioned, by the evangelist, that Jesus went into the mountain *himself alone*. For, by not taking any one of his disciples with him, our Lord most significantly corrected the error under which the multitude laboured, with regard to the nature of his kingdom.

We learn, moreover, from St. Matthew and Mark, that he went up into the mountain "to pray." Yes, beloved, after having passed the day in teaching and in feeding the multitude, our Lord remains, till the fourth watch of the night, engaged in prayer. In such perfect solitude, and in the deep silence of the night, our blessed Lord might

<sup>7</sup> Chap. xviii. 36.

freely pour out his whole soul into the bosom of his Father. And, doubtless, this communion between the Father and the Son was such as could not, with propriety, have been revealed to the sinful children of men; though we may be permitted to muse on it, in the inmost recesses of our hearts, as a high and adorable mystery!

Such is the history of the miraculous manner in which our Lord fed five thousand men, with five loaves and two fishes. It is a miracle most astonishing in itself, and most important on account of the vast multitude of persons who could bear witness to its truth. Indeed, it is a miracle so astonishing, and so important, that the history of it is given by each of the four evangelists. And I may add that the Fathers of our church have stamped it with the same character, by appointing this passage to be read twice in the course of the year; in addition to the history of a similar miracle, recorded in the eighth chapter of the Gospel by St. Mark.<sup>s</sup> The Sunday, on which this history is repeated for the last time, closes the Christian year. And, as often, therefore, as that day returns, our church calls upon us to *gather up the fragments that re-*

<sup>s</sup> See the Gospels for the fourth Sunday in Lent, and for the seventh and twenty-fifth Sundays after Trinity.

*main, that nothing be lost.* We cannot, it is true, recall the days and years that are passed ; but we may redeem the time that yet remains, by devoting it to the service of our Lord and our God :

‘ Time’s waters will not ebb, nor stay,  
Power cannot change them, but Love may ;  
What cannot be, Love counts it done.’<sup>9</sup>

And therefore, brethren, if that love shall be “ shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,”<sup>1</sup> we shall feel assured that the years we have lost, will not be remembered against us. For the Holy Spirit will seal to our hearts the blessed truth, that we are no longer “ strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”<sup>2</sup> And He will teach and enable us,

‘ Whole years of folly to outlive,  
In His unerring sight, who measures Life by Love!’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Keble.*

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Keble.*

## SECTION XXII.

### CHAP. VI. ver. 16—29.

#### JESUS WALKING ON THE SEA OF TIBERIAS, AND DISCOURSING AT CAPERNAUM.

The last section ended with relating that our Lord “departed again into a mountain himself alone.” And now, lest any one should misinterpret this departure, as either implying a distrust of his cause, or, as being a seclusion, which would render the Jews more excusable in their unbelief, our evangelist proceeds to relate the things which ensued that night, and on the following day, and which sufficiently show how our Lord manifested his glory on his return to Capernaum. His miraculous walk on the sea of Tiberias, to which our attention is first to be directed, is related both by St. Matthew and St. Mark.<sup>1</sup> But St. John repeats the narrative, not only that he may record all the circumstances immediately connected with the following discourse, but also that he may place, in a strong light, the incredulity of the Jews, even when

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiv. ; and Mark vi.

encompassed with such glorious exhibitions of divine power and authority in the person of our Lord.

*And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship; and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.<sup>2</sup>*

We find it mentioned, both by St. Matthew and St. Mark, that Jesus “constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.” The word “constrained,” as used by each of these evangelists, evidently implies that the disciples were themselves reluctant to depart. And, as we know that their zeal and their faith were, as yet, unenlightened, and that they were dreaming of earthly honours and dignities, in the kingdom which they had pictured to themselves, may we not believe that our Lord urged their immediate departure, lest they should be dis-

<sup>2</sup> Verses 16—21.

posed to join with the multitude in their wish to make him a king ?

The evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Mark, particularly state that it was “ in the fourth watch of the night,” or, between three and six, when “ Jesus went unto the disciples, walking on the sea.” And this additional circumstance of time, thus noticed in the two other narratives, shows how long our Lord had been engaged in prayer, and how long the ship, in which the disciples were embarked, had been tossed with the waves, in the midst of the sea. ‘ Yes,’ says Bishop Hall, ‘ all that longsome and tempestuous night, must the disciples wear out in danger and terror, as given over to the winds and waves. But, in the fourth watch of the night, when they were wearied out with toils and fears, then comes deliverance. At their entrance into the ship, at the rising of the tempest, at the shutting in of the evening, there was no news of Christ. But, when they have been all the night long beaten, not so much with storms and waves, as with their own thoughts, now, in the fourth watch, which was near to the morning, *Jesus came unto them.* And, purposely, not till then ; that he might exercise their patience ; that he might inure them to wait upon Divine Providence in cases of extremity ; that their devotions might be more whetted

by delay, that they might give gladder welcome to their deliverance.'

It is related, by our evangelist, as well as by St. Matthew and St. Mark, that, when the disciples saw *Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship, they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I, be not afraid*; or, as it is expressed more fully by the other two evangelists, "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid." And, again to borrow the language of Bishop Hall, 'There needs no other erection of their drooping hearts, but, *It is I*. For it is cordial enough to us, in the worst of our afflictions, to be assured of Christ's presence with us. O Saviour, say but, *It is I*, and let evils do their worst; thou needest not say any more. Thy voice was evidence enough; yes, so well were thy disciples acquainted with the tongue of thee, their Master, that *It is I*, was as much as an hundred names. Thou art the good Shepherd; and we are not of thy flock, if we know thee not, by thy voice, from a thousand. This is, indeed, a great word, yea, an ample style, *It is I*. The same tongue that said to Moses, "*I Am* hath sent thee," saith now to the disciples, *It is I*; I, your Lord and Master, I, the Commander of winds and waters, I, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, I, the God of spirits. Let heaven be but as one scroll, and let it be written all over with titles; still they cannot ex-

press more than, *It is I.* O sweet and seasonable word of a gracious Saviour, able to calm all tempests, able to revive all hearts! Say but so to my soul, and, in spite of hell, I am safe.'

St. Matthew relates two other miracles, which were performed on this occasion. For he describes the power which our Lord put forth, first to enable Peter to walk on the water, and then to save him when beginning to sink. And he also relates the ceasing of the wind, when Jesus entered into the ship. Omitting both these, St. John records another circumstance, not less remarkable; viz. that, although the ship had been labouring the whole night, in the midst of the sea, buffeted with the winds and waves, yet no sooner had Jesus entered into it, than *immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

Our Lord, however, did not deem it sufficient thus to demonstrate his divine glory by so many and such great miracles. But, knowing the blindness and dulness of those with whom he had to do, he deemed it further necessary to inculcate and explain the mysterious truths which related to himself. And, although many of those whom he was about to address, took offence at the words which he uttered, yet it is evident, from the consideration of the words themselves, that the cause of this offence was to be traced, not to his doctrine, but to the perverseness of his



hearers. This is sufficiently established by the discourse, which our Lord held with the Jews, on the following day, and in which, by describing the scope and character of his office, he virtually pointed out those erroneous notions which the multitude had just manifested, in wishing to "take him by force," and make him an earthly "king."<sup>2</sup> The discourse was held partly in public, in the synagogue,<sup>3</sup> and partly in private with his disciples.<sup>4</sup> And St. John thus describes the circumstances, which led to our Lord's public discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum.

*The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was now other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks.) When the people, therefore, saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? <sup>5</sup>*

Our Lord might have answered the question of the Jews, by referring to that glorious mani-

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 15.    <sup>3</sup> Ver. 22—59.    <sup>4</sup> Ver. 60—71.    <sup>5</sup> Ver. 22—25.

testation of his divine power, which had just been witnessed on the sea of Galilee. But, knowing that the question was prompted only by idle curiosity, and that it was directed only to carnal ends, our Lord passes over these circumstances, and proceeds, at once, to speak of those things which were suited to awaken their hearts to the grand truths of the Gospel. While their minds, therefore, were yet filled with admiration, on account of the late miraculous supply of food in the wilderness, our Lord, under the emblem of mystical food, explains to them the doctrine of the Gospel, respecting the only mode in which the soul is to be nourished unto eternal life. This discourse, in the synagogue at Capernaum, consists of six different answers of our Lord, in answer to as many questions on the part of the Jews. In the first two answers, to which I will at present restrict your attention, our Lord inculcates, generally, the only method of attaining and cherishing the spiritual life. And, in the four remaining answers, he strengthens and defends his declaration against the various exceptions of his hearers.

The first answer, which arises out of the question at the twenty-fifth verse, and which is contained in the two following verses, inculcates, in figurative language, the only method of salvation.

*Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I*

*say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*<sup>6</sup>

This exhortation of our Lord is beautifully illustrated by that passage in Isaiah, in which the prophet says, “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”<sup>7</sup> The work of faith is here designated, by “coming” and “buying without money,” and by “eating that which is good.” And, in opening his discourse in the same figurative language, our Lord briefly but powerfully enforces the exercise of a true and lively faith. For if, in the things of this life, men do not ever labour *more* diligently than in procuring *meat which perisheth* for their bodies, how much more, in the things which concern their souls, should they labour for *that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto them.* For

<sup>6</sup> Ver. 26, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. lv. 1, 2.

*Him*, my brethren, *hath God the Father sealed.* Yes, God the Father has *sealed Him*, with the testimony of the prophetic Scriptures. He has *sealed Him*, with the descent of the Holy Spirit, and with a voice from heaven at his baptism. He has *sealed Him*, with all those divine words, which the Son of man has uttered, and with all those wonderful works, which the Son of man has performed. And may we not add, that God the Father has *sealed Him*, with the faith of those who have been turned, by his grace, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. For all, who have “received his testimony, have set to their seal that God is true.”<sup>8</sup>

*Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*<sup>9</sup>

And it is in answer to this question, that our Lord now declares, without a figure, the only method of salvation.

*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord thus explains his exhortation, to labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, as being designed to point out the duty of believing on him, whom the Father hath sent.

<sup>8</sup> Chap. iii. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Ver. 28.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 29.

It is also worthy of remark that, whereas the Jews had spoken of *works*, in the plural number, our Lord says, in the singular number, This is the *work of God*; as if he would emphatically indicate, that faith is the “one thing needful;” the one *work of God*, by which man is justified in his sight. “The just,” says the prophet “shall live by FAITH.”<sup>2</sup> And, although other good works flow from faith, and indicate its existence, yet they do not procure for the soul *that meat which endureth unto everlasting life*; but they constitute, rather, that very *life*, which the believing soul does, in consequence, enjoy.

This, then, beloved, is, most emphatically, *the work of God, that we believe on him whom he hath sent*. In other words; This is the *most* compendious way, which can be pointed out to us, for entering into life; viz. that we should receive Jesus Christ into our hearts by faith. Let us do this, and all the rest will quickly follow. For *this is the work*; or, the work of works; so that all we do is as it were undone, and ourselves also, till this be done. But this will be as acceptable with God, as if we could keep the whole law; yea, it will be accepted in lieu of it. “For to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is

<sup>2</sup> Luke x. 42.<sup>3</sup> Hab. ii. 4.

counted for righteousness.”<sup>4</sup> ‘Where,’ says Gurnall, ‘by “him that worketh not,” is not meant a slothful lazy sinner, who hath no disposition to work; nor a rebellious sinner whose heart riseth against the work, which the whole law of God would employ him in; but the humbled sinner, who desires and endeavours to work, but is not able to do the task which the law as a covenant sets him. He is said, therefore, in a law sense, not to work, because he doth not work to the law’s purpose, so as to answer its demands, which will accept nothing short of perfect obedience. But the perfect obedience which the law demands, has been fulfilled by Christ. And, therefore, this man’s faith in Christ is counted to him for righteousness. That is; God, for Christ’s sake, reckons him to be righteous. And so he shall pass, at the great day, by the Judge’s sentence, as if he had never trod one step awry from the path of the law.’

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iv. 5.

## SECTION XXIII.

CHAP. VI. ver. 30—59.

### CONCLUSION OF OUR LORD'S PUBLIC DISCOURSE AT CAPERNAUM.

In that part of the discourse which we have already considered, our Lord has explained, both figuratively and literally, the only method of salvation. And, in the sequel of the discourse, he illustrates and enforces this solemn truth, by enlarging on the subject, in answer to four other observations made by the Jews, either directly to him, or in the way of argument and discussion among themselves.

Jesus had said, in answer to their second question ; “ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” But the minds of our Lord's hearers were filled with worldly expectations, and intent only on worldly things. And therefore it was that, though they had so lately exclaimed, after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, “ This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world,” they took offence at the doctrine which he was now

reculcating, and began to question his Divine mission.

*They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written,<sup>9</sup> He gave them bread from heaven to eat.<sup>1</sup>*

In the above words, the Jews seem, in effect, to say to our Lord; What dost thou perform more than others, or even equal to what Moses did, that we should treat thee with such extraordinary regard? Thou didst, indeed, feed some few thousands yesterday, with those few barley loaves, in a miraculous manner. But what was that, in comparison with the wonders performed in the days of our great lawgiver, when two millions of our forefathers were fed with manna, for the space of forty years?

*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.<sup>2</sup>*

Struck with the solemn emphasis of this language, though ignorant of its meaning, some of them said,

<sup>9</sup> See Neh. ix. 15, and Ps. lxxviii. 24, 25.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 30, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 32, 33.



*Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*<sup>3</sup>

Our Lord, having thus expressly spoken of himself, as the *true bread from heaven*, and having thus described the blessedness of those who come to him, and believe on him, now goes on to contrast, in a very impressive manner, the evil heart of unbelief which his hearers had so awfully evinced, with that *belief* in himself, which leadeth to everlasting life.

*But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not.*<sup>4</sup> *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*<sup>5</sup>

Observe the fortieth verse, as compared with the thirty-ninth. In the thirty-ninth verse. Jesus had said, that all that *the Father had given him* should be saved. But, lest this should be wrested to the encouragement of Antinomian

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 34, 35.

<sup>4</sup> See v. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ver. 36—40.

presumption, Jesus shows, in the fortieth verse, how indispensable it is for us to show, that we ARE THUS GIVEN by the Father to the Son, by seeing and believing on that Son.<sup>6</sup>

Observe, also, how, in these verses, Jesus makes mention, three several times, of the Father's *will*: and how he sets before us three certain effects of that blessed will; first, the

\* ‘ This is the way, therefore, to attain unto salvation; viz. to obey the gospel of Christ. And if God will have those to be saved through faith, whom he hath chosen; and if he doth, by this means, establish and put in execution his eternal decree, whosoever, not being contented with Christ, doth curiously inquire after eternal predestination, doth, in effect, desire to be saved otherwise than the purpose and counsel of God hath appointed. The election of God is, of itself, hidden and secret. But he revealeth it, as it were, by effectual calling, whereof he vouchsafeth to make us partakers. And therefore they are deceived, who seek their own salvation, or the salvation of others, in the labyrinth of predestination, not holding the way of faith which is set before them. Furthermore, as the election of God carrieth with it effectual calling, and as they are knit together with an indissoluble knot; so when God hath called us effectually unto the faith of Christ, this ought to be of as great force with us, as if he should, by setting to his seal, confirm the decree concerning our salvation. For the testimony of the Spirit is, in very deed, the sealing of our adoption. And, therefore, every man's faith is unto him a sufficient witness of God's eternal predestination, so that it is sacrilege to inquire any higher.’—*Calvin.*

coming of God's chosen people to Christ;<sup>7</sup> secondly, their perseverance even unto the end;<sup>8</sup> and thirdly, *life everlasting*, as the crown of every other gift.<sup>9</sup>

But *the Jews*, utterly regardless of these great and concerning truths, *murmured at him because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it, then, that he saith, I came down from heaven?*<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord, however, before he proceeds to vindicate his representation of himself, as the *bread of life*, endeavours to urge home upon the hearts of his hearers the conviction of that truth, from which they were all disposed to shrink; viz. that it was an evil heart of unbelief, which led them to *murmur* at the above saying. He first of all, therefore, solemnly assures them, in language well suited to remind us all of the impotence and blindness of our fallen nature, that, without the influences of Divine grace, their prejudices against him would prove invincible and *fatal*. And this assurance is followed up by another most emphatic representation of the blessed office of faith, as enabling us to lay hold of *everlasting life*.

<sup>7</sup> Ver. 37, 38.<sup>8</sup> Ver. 39.<sup>9</sup> Ver. 40.<sup>1</sup> Ver. 41, 42.

*Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written [in the prophets,<sup>2</sup> And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God; he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.<sup>3</sup>*

And now it is that, returning to the image which he had employed in the thirty-fifth verse, he proceeds, saying,

*I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.<sup>4</sup>*

The Jews, when asking our Lord to show them a sign, had intimated that his feeding the five thousand with the five barley-loaves was but a small thing, when compared with what Moses did, when he fed the whole camp of Israel. But our blessed Lord here declares the purposes

<sup>2</sup> See Isa. liv. 13; Jer. xxxi. 34; Mic. iv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 43—47.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 48—51.

of his grace and bounty, to be far more important in their nature, and far more extensive in their operation; inasmuch as they reach to the whole world, and convey life, immortal life, to all who believe in him: *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. But if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*<sup>5</sup>

But, though our Lord had told the Jews, in plain terms,<sup>6</sup> that he was desiring to inculcate the necessity of faith in himself, as the promised Messiah, whom "God the Father had sealed;" and though the image, which he had been employing, was evidently intended to illustrate, in a powerful and yet familiar manner, that all-important truth; still

*The Jews perversely strove among themselves saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*<sup>7</sup>

And how, indeed, could our blessed Lord have employed such language as this, had he not been

<sup>5</sup> 'Truly it is a wonderful purpose of God, that he hath set before us life in that flesh, wherein was the only matter of death before. And thus doth he provide for our infirmity; since he doth not call us above the clouds to enjoy life, but sheweth the same to us as plainly on earth, as if he had lifted us up into the hidden places of his kingdom.' —Calvin.

<sup>6</sup> Ver. 29, 35, 47.

<sup>7</sup> Ver. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Ver. 52.

greater than Moses? How could our blessed Lord have employed such language as this, had he not been the High Priest of those good things to come, which the manna but faintly foreshadowed? Ye, therefore, who have hitherto regarded Jesus Christ, only as a human instructor, listen to the concluding portion of our Lord's discourse; and then say, whether it does not exhibit a clear and most affecting view of that "love of Christ which passeth knowledge:" a love, which led him to quit his throne of glory, that he might give himself a willing sacrifice for the sins of men?

*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*<sup>9</sup>

I pause to observe how evident it is, on comparing this language with the fifty-first verse, that, by *flesh and blood*, we are here to understand the human nature of that Divine Word, who was "made flesh, and dwelt among us."<sup>1</sup> His *flesh and blood* did then become, as it were, our meat and drink, when, in *giving his flesh for the life of the world*, he gave his body to be wounded, and his blood to be shed on the cross, for our sins. For then it was, that he was declared to be 'the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of

<sup>9</sup> Ver. 53.

<sup>1</sup> Chap. i. 14.

the world.'<sup>2</sup> Yes, then it was that the *flesh and blood* of Christ, as separated by death, procured salvation for sinners. And, in continuing to employ the same mode of expression, in the four following verses, our Lord emphatically points out the design, the efficacy, and the benefits, of his mysterious sufferings.

*Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*<sup>3</sup>

And now, returning to the image which he had before employed, our Lord thus concludes:

*This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.*<sup>4</sup>

My beloved brethren, Ponder in your hearts the words of the above discourse, and say whether, on the one hand, it does not place *Jesus Christ* before us, as the eternal Son of God, and whether, on the other hand, it does not plainly

<sup>2</sup> *Preface for Easter Day, in the Communion Office.*

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 54—57.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 58, 59.

teach us, that “the life which we now live in the flesh, we” should “live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.”<sup>5</sup>

1. Does it not place Jesus Christ before us, as the eternal Son of God? As we read the Scriptures, we shall often find the sacred writers representing the instructions therein contained, as the food of the soul. But where shall we find it said, of any other teacher, that he is himself the food which we are commanded to eat? Where shall we find it said, of any other teacher, that we are to eat *his flesh and drink his blood*? The word of God, says Jesus, *is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.* Yea, he adds, *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

2. And if Jesus Christ be here placed before us, as the eternal Son of God, are we not here taught, with equal plainness, that “the life which we now live in the flesh,” we should “live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us?” In other words; Are we not here invited to partake, by a true and lively

<sup>5</sup> Gal. ii. 20.



faith, of the benefits of Christ's mysterious sacrifice? *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, says Jesus, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* It is plain, from these words, that the believer has not only the title to eternal life but the actual commencement of it: even here: *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, HATH eternal life.* And, to assure the believer that the resurrection of his soul to spiritual life is the pledge of the resurrection of his body to everlasting glory, our Lord adds: *And I will raise him up at the last day.* Yea, says Jesus, *he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. For this is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.* And, therefore, as we would hope to be partakers of such great salvation, we must show the reality of our faith, by feeding, continually, on this *living bread*.

My brethren, Our Lord has expressly enjoined us to draw near to our heavenly Father, day by day, with the words of this petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." And, if we would understand the full scope of this prayer, we must remember how indispensable it is, that we should ask and receive daily nourishment, both for our bodies and our souls. Now, it is not, as we shall readily admit, the mere preparation of our natu-

al food, which nourishes and sustains the body ;  
 ut it must be received and incorporated into the  
 ystem. And, but for the blindness and per-  
 erseness of our hearts, we should admit, with  
 equal readiness, that Christ does not give life to  
 our souls, merely by dying for us, or by being ex-  
 hibited to us in the Gospel ; but only, when he  
 s received through faith ; when we feed on him  
 and digest him in humble meditation ; and when  
 we thus find our souls nourished and strength-  
 ened to every good word and work.

Let us feed, then, day by day, on this *living bread*, by faith with thanksgiving. Let us re-  
 ceive Jesus Christ, by renewed exercises of a  
 true and lively faith, as our “ daily bread.” And  
 let us deem it one of our highest privileges to  
 receive, from time to time, the most comfortable  
 sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, under  
 the sweet persuasion that, at the table of the  
 Lord, the souls of believers are strengthened and  
 refreshed, by his body and blood, even as their  
 bodies are by the bread and wine ; and that they  
 thus become “ one bread, and one body,” inasmuch  
 as they are “ all partakers of that one bread.”<sup>6</sup>  
 So shall we find our spirits recruited, our hearts  
 encouraged, and our strength repaired, to run  
 the race, to endure the conflict, and to perform  
 the work which God has appointed us, until we

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. x. 17.

are "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

<sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 21.

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In the above discourse at Capernaum, our Lord inculcates, in the most direct and impressive manner, the necessity of spiritual union with him, as the perpetual food of our souls. But the language which he employs is suited, at the same time, to lead our thoughts onward to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the progress of this discourse, Jesus plainly spake of his now approaching death. And, immediately after its delivery, he expressly warned his disciples of the treachery of Judas Iscariot. May we not believe, therefore, that, in like manner, our Lord purposely employed language applicable to the holy ordinance which he was to institute on the eve of his mysterious passion; in order that his disciples might afterwards recur to his words, as beautifully descriptive of the sacrament which was so instituted? As Dr. Waterland justly remarks: 'It would not be right to interpret the chapter, as relating directly to the holy sacrament. For example, the words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," do not mean directly, 'Ye have no life without the Lord's Supper,' but 'Ye have no life without participating in our Lord's passion.' Nevertheless, since the Lord's Supper is one way of participating in his passion, and a very important one, it is very pertinent and proper to urge the doctrine of this chapter, both for the clearer understanding of the beneficial nature of the Lord's Supper, and for exciting Christians to a frequent and devout reception of it. Such is the use which some of the early Fathers made of this chapter; and such is the use which our Church justly makes of it at this day.'

## SECTION XXIV.

## CHAP. VI. VER. 60—71.

OUR LORD'S PRIVATE DISCOURSE WITH HIS DISCIPLES  
AT CAPERNAUM.

The discourse, which we have been considering in the last two sections, was delivered in the synagogue at Capernaum. In the remainder of the chapter, we have another discourse, which our Lord afterwards held with his disciples in private ; part of it being with his disciples at large,<sup>1</sup> and part with the twelve apostles.<sup>2</sup>

The evangelist first relates our Lord's conversation with the body of his disciples, who were astonished at the things he had just been saying in the synagogue :

*Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying ; who can hear it ? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you ? What and if ye shall see the Son of man*

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 60—65.<sup>2</sup> Ver. 66—71.

*ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*<sup>2</sup>

It was to *many of the disciples*, as to the great body of the Jewish people, a *hard saying*, that Jesus should attribute to himself a divine origin, and that he should speak of giving more excellent food than their fathers had enjoyed, when under the guidance of Moses in the wilderness. *This is a hard saying*, said many of his disciples: *who can hear it?* But when Jesus knew in himself that some of his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, *Doth this offend you?* And he followed up this question by a short, but most emphatic address to them, in which he first exposed the two great prejudices under which some of them were labouring, and then laid open the evil heart of unbelief, out of which those prejudices arose.

1. It was one of their two great difficulties, that Jesus, by speaking of his descent from heaven, had ascribed to himself a divine origin.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 60—65.

And it was in answer, therefore, to this prejudice, that our Lord says, *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*

Our Lord had, once before, in the discourse which is recorded in the third chapter,<sup>4</sup> touched upon the subject of his ascension into heaven. And now he again refers to it, as being much more wonderful than any of the things which his hearers had considered as incredible. There is, indeed, a close connexion between these two discourses of our Lord, as recorded, respectively, in the third and sixth chapters of this gospel. For, in the one, our Lord speaks of the origin, and, in the other, of the support, of the spiritual life. And each may be described as breathing the things of heaven in every part. On the present occasion, our Lord would seem to refer to his ascension, as suited to remove those difficulties which many entertained respecting his doctrine. For it would tend, immediately, to take away the offence, which even many of his disciples had taken, when they heard him speaking of himself, as having “come down from heaven.”<sup>5</sup> And it would tend, also, indirectly, to remove all those false conceptions which the Jews might have entertained, as to “eating the flesh” of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

2. And this leads me to the consideration of

<sup>4</sup> See chap. iii. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ver. 58, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Ver. 52.

the words which our Lord evidently directed against the second difficulty in the minds of many of his disciples. For, when they heard Jesus speak of the "eating" of his "flesh," they perversely understood his words, either according to their exact literal signification, or as referring, at least, to some carnal benefit, which was to be enjoyed by his followers. Jesus, therefore, says to them; *It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing:*<sup>7</sup> *the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

Some commentators would view these words in immediate connexion with the preceding verse. And they would therefore understand our Lord, as thus reminding his disciples, how he had already been guarding them against a literal interpretation of the preceding discourse, by speaking of his ascension into heaven. For, if his disciples were even then at a loss to understand how, according to their own erroneous conceptions of our Lord's language, they could be literally fed with his flesh, much more would they stagger at such a command, when he was gone up into heaven. But, whether we view the words, as bearing immediately on the preceding verse,

<sup>7</sup> *The flesh profiteth nothing.* 'This,' as Bishop JOLLY observes, in his work on the Eucharist, 'at once forbids the thought of Christ's NATURAL flesh, for that profits infinitely, and, in personal union with the Deity, is all in all.'

or as relating, generally, to the whole scope of our Lord's discourse in the synagogue; he plainly declares that the doctrines which he had been inculcating, were altogether in opposition to their carnal notions and desires. For their views were earthly, and might be termed *flesh*, or *fleshly*, as pertaining only to the support of the body, or some carnal advantage. But his doctrines were spiritual; and fitted to quicken and nourish the soul: *It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* That is, as Bishop Hall paraphrases the passage: 'It is not the outward sound of my words, wherein ye are to rest, and to seek comfort; but it is the inward and spiritual sense of them. Thus taken, they shall be found to have sweetness and life in them.' And, in like manner, St. Paul afterwards said to the Corinthians: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."<sup>s</sup>

3. Having thus exposed the two great prejudices, under which many of his disciples laboured, our Lord proceeds to point out the evil heart of unbelief, to which those prejudices owed their origin: *But there are some of you that be-*

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14.



lieve not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, *Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.* In thus declaring that there were some of them that believed not, our Lord not only shewed his intimate knowledge of the thoughts and intents of the heart, but also provided against the offence which might afterwards be taken at the departure of some of his followers. For it would be thus made evident, from what our Lord had now said, that they “went out FROM HIM,” because they were “not OF HIM.”<sup>9</sup>

To all such Jesus here applies, with additional emphasis, the words which he had formerly uttered, in the synagogue, with regard to the murmuring Jews: *Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.* For this verse should evidently be regarded as an elucidation of the forty-fourth verse, in which our Lord had said; “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” By now substituting the expression *given to him of the Father*, our Lord plainly shows that, in the former words, “except the Father draw him,” he was referring to the gracious influences of that Holy Spirit,

<sup>9</sup> 1 John ii. 19.

who is, in such a peculiar sense, *the gift of the Father*, in the hearts of his children. And may we not say, also, on comparing the forty-fourth, forty-fifth, and sixty-fifth verses, that Jesus here marks divine grace by three different characters? To be “drawn by the Father,” marks the blessed efficacy of divine attraction. To be “taught of the Father,” shows that it is a Father’s guidance, which enables the believer to know the truth, and to hold it in love. And, when our Lord says, in the last verse, that they only can come to him, to whom it is *given of the Father*, he shows us that divine grace is wholly gratuitous, and that it is the free *gift* of God.

And, at the close of the above passage, the evangelist has emphatically recorded how the truth of our Lord’s declaration was immediately, and mournfully, proved. For,

*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*<sup>1</sup>

‘Many might think it better,’ says Calvin, ‘that no such discourse had been delivered; since it was unto many an occasion of falling away. But it was requisite that what had been foretold of Christ, should appear in his doctrine; and it must still daily appear: viz. that he is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.”’<sup>2</sup> As for us, we must always so temper our doctrine, that

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. viii. 14.

we offend none through our own fault. For, as much as lieth in us, we must keep all. And we must beware, therefore, lest, by speaking unadvisedly, we trouble the ignorant and weak. Yet we can never take such good heed, but that the doctrine of Christ shall be unto many an occasion of offence; since an evil heart of unbelief will suck poison out of most wholesome meat, and gall out of honey. The Son of God knew well what was profitable. Yet we see that even he offended, by his words, many of his disciples.'

*Then said Jesus unto the twelve,<sup>2</sup> Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God; Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.<sup>3</sup>*

In the previous discourse, which our Lord had held with his disciples at large, he had spoken of the *words of life*; of them that *believed not*; and of them that were given to him of *his Father*. And, accordingly, St. Peter, who had been

<sup>2</sup> St. John evidently presupposes both the names, and the appellation, of the apostles, as already known from the preceding gospels.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 67—71.

listening with devout attention to every word that had fallen from the lips of our Lord, adopts these very words, as the leading points of his confession, and says; *Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. And we BELIEVE and are sure that thou art that Christ, THE SON of the living God.*

In these emphatic words, St. Peter seems to say, for himself and for his brethren, that they could not, if they would, and that they would not, if they could, *go away* from Christ. He declares, on the one hand, that they could not, if they would, by saying, *Lord, to whom shall we go?*<sup>4</sup> For these words distinctly imply their firm

<sup>4</sup> Our Lord said to the twelve, most tenderly, *Will ye also go away?* St. Peter promptly answered, No. But observe on what ground he put it: *Lord, to whom shall we go?* He did not bring forward evidences of our Lord's mission, though he knew of such. But he simply felt that if CHRIST was not to be trusted, there was nothing in the world to be trusted: and this was a conclusion repugnant both to his reason and his heart. He had within him ideas of greatness and goodness, holiness and eternity; he had a love of them; he had an instructive hope and longing after their possession. And nothing could convince him that this unknown good was a dream. *Eternal life* was the object which his soul, as far as it had learned to realize and express its wishes, supremely longed for. And in CHRIST he found what he wanted. He says, *Lord, to whom SHALL we go?* implying that he must go somewhere. CHRIST had asked,

conviction, that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he alone was able to teach and to save them. And he declares, on the other hand, that they would not, if they could, by saying, *Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Simon Peter here brings forward two powerful arguments, to show why they would not go away from Christ. The one is taken from the excellency of the words of Christ; *Thou hast the words of eternal life.* The other was derived from their firm persuasion that he was *that Christ, the Son of the living God.* The unbelieving Jews had, indeed, so far recognized Jesus *as the Christ*, or the anointed of the Father, as to wish to take

*Will ye also go AWAY?* He only spoke of leaving HIM: but, in St. Peter's thought, to leave HIM, was to go somewhere else. And he spoke, therefore, as if leaving HIM, implied taking another god. That negative state of neither believing nor disbelieving, neither acting this way nor that which is so much in esteem now, did not occur to his mind as possible. The fervent apostle knew not what scepticism was. Somewhither he MUST go: but whither else could he go? If CHRIST could deceive him, *to whom should he go?* His ways might sometimes appear dark, His words might be often perplexing; but still he found in HIM, what he found nowhere else; he found, amid difficulties, a realization of his inward longings: *THOU hast the words of eternal life.*—*Tracts for the Times*, No. 85.

him by force, and make him a king. But they murmured at him, when he spoke of his descent from heaven.<sup>5</sup> Simon Peter, therefore, does not deem it enough to acknowledge him only as *the Christ*; but he also confesses him to be *the Son of God*, who “came down from heaven,” to “give life unto the world.”<sup>6</sup>

In like manner, brethren, we all profess, in the Apostle's Creed, that we ‘believe’ in ‘Jesus Christ,’ as ‘the only Son’ of God. And happy, indeed, are they, who can say, with Simon Peter; *We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* Happy are they, who are experimentally convinced of the great truth, that Jesus Christ is that beloved Son, whom the Father hath sent to be the Saviour of the world. Yea, happy are they, to whom Jesus Christ has revealed himself, as their Prophet, by enlightening their understanding; as their Priest, by tranquillizing their conscience; and as their King, by the renewal of their hearts in holiness.

In the above address to our Lord, Simon Peter had spoken, not only in his own name, but also in that of his companions. For he felt respecting them all according to the law of love. And we may suppose, also, that he wished, by his own example, and by the expression of his hope respecting them, to stimulate them all to constancy

<sup>5</sup> See verses 41, 42.

<sup>6</sup> Verse 33.

in the faith. But here, as on other occasions, our Lord immediately cautions him, not to be too confident. For he utters a word of solemn warning, addressed, not only to Simon Peter, but to the whole company of the apostles, saying, *Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*

Every word of this appeal was suited to exhibit, in a strong light, the greatness of the privileges which the apostles enjoyed; and thus to heighten the ingratitude of him, who should be guilty of betraying his Lord and Master. *HAVE NOT I CHOSEN you?* For this was their high prerogative, that they had been called to the office of apostleship, by *the Christ, the Son of God*. *HAVE NOT I CHOSEN you?* For he had chosen those, who were not only sinners, as others, but who were, also, poor, despised, rude, and illiterate Galileans. *HAVE NOT I CHOSEN you TWELVE?* For our Lord had selected them as a little chosen band; passing by so many others. And yet *ONE OF THEM was a devil*. Yes, one out of that little chosen band, had the spirit, the envy, the malice, and the treasonable designs, of *a devil*; and was prepared to show his resemblance to the old serpent, by exercising his malice against the second Adam, even as that serpent did against the first.

The evangelist adds, that *he spake of Judas*

scariot the son of Simon: for he it was that would betray him, being one of the twelve. We are not to infer, however, from the words of the above verse, that our Lord actually designated Judas by name; since the apostles continued to treat him afterwards with the same confidence as before.<sup>7</sup> Our Lord expressed himself, rather, in such a manner, as to put all on their guard, to check their confidence, and to lead them all not to judge one another, but to carry on, in their own hearts, the work of self-examination and earnest prayer. It was to be *one of the twelve*, that should betray him. And if there was to be a betrayer, even among the immediate followers of Christ; where is the family, where is the church upon earth, that can be free from the breath of contagion? My brethren; may we all take warning from the passage before us. And, knowing the dangers to which we are exposed, from our own hearts, the world, and the devil, may we be continually saying, with St. Peter, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

<sup>7</sup> Chap. xiii. 29.



## SECTION XXV.

## CHAP. VII. ver. 1—13.

## JESUS GOING TO THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

We are now entering upon the fifth journey of our Lord, as related in this gospel. And for the record of the various important events, which occurred during this journey, we are indebted solely to the evangelist St. John, who has enlarged upon this, more than on any of the other journeys, as being more especially adapted to the scope and purpose of his history. For it is here most clearly seen how Jesus sought, in the days of his flesh, to convince the Jews respecting the excellency of his person and office. The description of this journey extends from the beginning of the seventh chapter to the end of the twenty-first verse of the tenth chapter; and it may be divided into two parts. In the former part, which is contained in the first thirteen verses of the seventh chapter, are related the circumstances of our Lord's journey to Jerusalem, at the feast of tabernacles, celebrated six months before his death. And, in the latter part, are

enumerated the various conferences which our Lord held with the Jews, during the above festival, respecting the dignity of his person and office.

*After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee : for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.*<sup>1</sup>

The passover, the pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles, were the three great feasts, at which all the males assembled at Jerusalem. The feast of tabernacles was instituted, to commemorate the time when the people of Israel dwelt in tents in the wilderness. And the Jews all dwelt in tents or booths, during its celebration, which was always a time of general and profuse rejoicing. The period at which this feast was celebrated, was six months after the passover. This, at once, fixes the interval which had elapsed since the history in the preceding chapter. And it appears that, during this interval, Jesus had *walked in Galilee : for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.* We must conclude, therefore, that our Lord had not been present, this year, either at the paschal or pentecostal feast. And the evangelist tells us that he had thus abstained from *walking in Jewry, because the*

<sup>1</sup> Verses 1, 2.

*Jews sought to kill him.* We have seen how, even at the first passover, after the commencement of his earthly ministry, Jesus was unwilling to "commit himself"<sup>2</sup> to the Jews. And we have seen how, at the second passover, the Jews openly "sought to kill him."<sup>3</sup> Our Lord, therefore, had subsequently *walked in Galilee*; not because he desired to avoid death; but because his time was not yet fully come for accomplishing his Father's will.

I have said that the feasts of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, were the three great feasts of the Jews. And I would pause, for a while, to consider the spiritual blessings which they were intended to foreshadow. In the passover, Christians discern their deliverance from sin and Satan by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and the passover of all true believers. In the pentecost, Christians discern their everlasting union with God by that Holy Spirit who writes the words of the law on their hearts. And, in the feast of tabernacles, they discern the continual help and protection which is derived by the church yet militant on earth, from the grace and the providence of God: a help and a protection, with which every child of God is encompassed, as with a shield, until he reaches that

<sup>2</sup> Chap. ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Chap. v. 16, 18.

heavenly Canaan, in which he will experience perfect deliverance from sin, and an entire conformity to the divine image.

To proceed with the history before us.

*His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou doest these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.*<sup>4</sup>

We may infer, from what is written in the Acts of the Apostles,<sup>5</sup> that the prejudices, which his brethren now entertained against Jesus, were afterwards fully dissipated, and that they became firm believers. But they *did not believe in him* at present, because he did not employ the means which they expected that the Messiah would employ, for elevating himself and them. And filled, therefore, with these carnal expectations, they said unto Jesus, *Depart hence, and go into Judea, that THY DISCIPLES also*,—a mode of expression which sufficiently implied that they did not regard themselves as belonging to that body, —*may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou doest these things, shew thyself to the world.*

<sup>4</sup> Verses 3—5.

<sup>5</sup> See Acts i. 14.

Chrysostom says, with respect to the phrase here rendered, *seeketh to be known openly*, that the original words,<sup>6</sup> which import the love of glory, evidently denote, seeking, as a Rabbi to be followed and magnified by the people. This was what his brethren desired for him. And finding fault with him, therefore, for working his miracles in a retired place, if not doubting, altogether, the truth of those miracles, they now urge him to perform them at Jerusalem. Stay no longer, as they seem to say to our Lord, in this poor, obscure country, but go, and preach, and work miracles at Jerusalem, that *your disciples also may see the works that you do*; and that their numbers being increased, they may, especially on such a public occasion, favour your designs to set up your kingdom. For if you can do any wonderful works, it is proper that you should establish and spread your fame, by doing them in the most public manner, in the most famous places, and on the most public occasions: that men of authority and power may see, and be convinced by them: *If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.*

In these reproachful and impatient words, which proceeded out of an evil heart of unbelief, we may trace the fulfilment of the psalmist's declaration, spoken concerning the Messiah:

<sup>6</sup> ζητεῖ ἐν παρρησίᾳ εἶναι.

I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children." <sup>7</sup> It is here plainly written, for our warning, that no mere carnal prerogatives can avail anything, in the great concern of salvation; since, otherwise, the brethren of Jesus would have been the first to believe in him. And we here learn, also, that it is not the mere possession, but the diligent and faithful use, of the means of grace, which brings a store of blessings in its train; since, otherwise, these persons could not possibly have remained shut up in unbelief, who had conversed with Jesus from his infancy, and who had possessed, therefore, such frequent opportunities of witnessing his holiness, and his inherent, though veiled, majesty.

Listen now to the mild and gentle, but very emphatic terms, in which Jesus "reproves the ambition and the boldness of his kinsmen." <sup>8</sup>

*Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come."* <sup>9</sup>

The general body of interpreters understand

<sup>7</sup> Psal. lxxix. 8.

<sup>8</sup> See the heading of the chapter, in the authorised version.

<sup>9</sup> Verses 6—8.

our Lord's words, *My time is not yet come*, as relating only to the approaching feast of tabernacles. His brethren might go up to the feast at any time, because their going would not attract attention. But it was not his proper time for going up; because, if he went then, while multitudes were flocking to Jerusalem, it might have the appearance of parade and ostentation. In order, therefore, that his going thither might not excite any attention, and that he might avoid every occasion of a tumult, our Lord remained in Galilee, until the great mass of the people were gone up to the feast.

But there would seem to be a further meaning in the words, *My time is not yet come*; more especially as our Lord says, still more forcibly, in the eighth verse, *My time is not yet full come*. While they may be understood, therefore, as relating, in the first instance, to the approaching feast of tabernacles; they appear, also, to point to the *time*, when he was publicly to declare himself to be the Redeemer of the world, by accomplishing the work of salvation; to that *time*, when, after dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification, his glory should be manifested, not only, as his brethren now desired, to a few persons assembled at Jerusalem, but to the whole world. Viewing the language of our Lord in this, its most extensive signification, we may

nderstand him, as saying to his brethren :  
 However safely you may go up at the beginning  
 f the feast, seeing that *the world cannot hate you,*  
 who are not opposed to it in your principles and  
 designs, it is not meet that I, whom they seek to  
 kill, should go up so early, and thus afford them  
 an opportunity for concerting measures against  
 me; seeing that *my time is not yet full come,*  
 when I am to be delivered into their hands, and  
 when the things spoken concerning me are to be  
 fulfilled.'

*When he had said these words unto them, he  
 abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were  
 gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not  
 openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews  
 sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?  
 And there was much murmuring among the  
 people concerning him: for some said, He is a good  
 man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.  
 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of  
 the Jews.*<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, we behold our Lord once more  
 visiting Jerusalem, notwithstanding the treat-  
 ment which he had already experienced in that  
 city, in order that he might gather some from  
 thence into his fold, before he should finish his  
 course. We are told, however, by the evangelist,  
 that he *went up, not openly, but as it were in*

<sup>1</sup> Verses 9—13.



*secret.* That is; He went up, not before the feast, when all the roads were filled with Jews assembling from every quarter, but during the first days of the feast, when the roads were now comparatively unoccupied, and when he would be able, therefore, to accomplish his journey without exciting any attention. It is evident, however, that there was a great expectation of him among the Jews at Jerusalem; for they *sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.*

The word employed in the latter clause of the twelfth verse, denotes, *causing to err*. It may be understood as describing, in its original acceptance, those evil shepherds, who lead their flocks astray. And, in applying it, therefore, to Jesus, the Jews insinuated that he was leading the people astray from the doctrine of Moses and the prophets, and that he was liable, therefore, to the sentence of death denounced against false prophets.<sup>2</sup> There were others, however, who said that he was *a good man*. And, in this connexion, the word seems to import, what is said by Isaiah respecting him, viz. that there was "no deceit," or "guile, in his mouth."<sup>3</sup> *Howbeit*, adds the

<sup>2</sup> See Deut. xiii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> See Isa. liii. 9; and 1 Pet. ii. 22.

evangelist, *no man spake openly*, or boldly, *of him, for fear of the Jews*. The enemies of Jesus spoke out boldly, and without any reserve, in defence of a bad cause. But, alas! the good cause no one dared to defend. His enemies were not silent: but his friends had not courage to utter with their lips the thoughts of their hearts concerning him. No; not one of them *spake openly of him, for fear of the Jews*.

And must it not still be said, brethren, that, while unbelievers are always ready to support their views with specious arguments, or ungodly mockery, the professed followers of Jesus are too often afraid to *speak openly of him, for fear of man*? Must it not still be said, that the body of professed Christians are afraid to confess Jesus Christ, because they “love the praise of men more than the praise of God?”<sup>4</sup> And yet, if He is “not ashamed to call us brethren;”<sup>5</sup> how can we be ashamed to call Him, Master and Lord? O! if we know anything of that love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, we shall surely feel that, if we are to be ashamed of anything, we ought to be ashamed of the coldness and darkness of our own hearts; we ought to be ashamed of speaking and doing and suffering so little for Him, who has done and suffered everything for

<sup>4</sup> Chap. xii. 43.<sup>5</sup> Heb. ii. 11.

us. Let us be ashamed, then, of the darkness of our understandings, of the rebellion of our wills, and of the sinfulness of our affections, after all that divine grace has done for us; but let us never be ashamed of Jesus Christ and his salvation. Let us consider, rather, how it was promised for us, at our baptism, that we should 'never be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.' And let us pray, that we may have grace to 'fight manfully under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil,' remembering always, how our Lord has said, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven:"<sup>6</sup> yea, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and the holy angels:"<sup>7</sup> but "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Matt. x. 33.<sup>7</sup> Mark viii. 38.<sup>8</sup> Matt. x. 32.

## SECTION XXVI.

CHAP. VII. ver. 14—29.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE ABOUT THE MIDST OF THE  
FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

We were told, at the close of the last section, that “no man spake openly of Jesus, for fear of the Jews.”<sup>1</sup> No one of his followers came boldly forward, to defend his cause, and to reply to the unjust accusations, which were preferred against him. But, though his followers were silent, Jesus himself now appears in public, to vindicate his own cause.

*Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.*<sup>2</sup>

And thus begins the first of those five public conferences, which our Lord now held with the Jews at Jerusalem, in order that his glory might be fully declared to all who were assembled at the feast, and, also, that the perverseness and incredulity of the Jews might be plainly shown to be without excuse. As the sacrifices gradually decreased in number, from the first to the last

<sup>1</sup> Verse 13.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 14.

day of the feast, the people were now more at leisure to hear the words which Jesus should utter. *About the midst of the feast, therefore, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.* And in so doing, he showed, at once, his love for the souls of those who had sought to kill him; his confidence in the truth of those doctrines which he thus exposed to the fullest and strictest investigation; and his divine power, which so entirely restrained, for the time, the wrath of his enemies that they dared not to lay violent hands upon him.

*And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*<sup>3</sup>

We are here told that the Jews marvelled, saying, *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* Though our Lord had, at the first passover, driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple; and though, at the second passover, he had publicly vindicated the miracle which he had performed in restoring the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, yet it does not appear that he had before appeared in the temple as a public teacher. The Jews, therefore, now observed with admiration and amazement, how profound was the acquaintance with the Old Testament Scriptures exhibited by One, who had never been instructed in any of their celebrated schools.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 15.

nd, in thus *marvelling* at Him, they unconsciously bore their testimony to his divine authority, and showed how inexcusable they were in not listening to so extraordinary a teacher.

Upon hearing this cavil of the Jews, our Lord proceeds to declare the true origin and character of his doctrine.

*Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, i. e. if any man is ready and willing to do it, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness, i. e. no falsehood, or deception, is in him.*<sup>4</sup>

In asserting that the doctrine was *not his own*, it is obvious that our Lord must be understood to declare, that he came neither, like a false prophet, to “teach them lies in the name of the Lord,”<sup>5</sup> nor, like one of their rabbis, to make void the word of God, with legends and traditions. He came into the world, to deliver to men the counsel of the Most High. And how were they to know whether the words they heard came from a mortal, who had taken this honour to himself uncalled, or from One, whom the Father had sanctified and sealed? Simply, by

<sup>4</sup> Verses 16—18.

<sup>5</sup> Zech. xiii. 3.

keeping themselves "without partiality and without hypocrisy;"<sup>6</sup> by preserving the mind in its integrity; by bringing themselves into a readiness to admit and to comply with the will of God, whether in matters of belief or practice, before they undertook to judge of a revelation from him. With this preparation of heart, their understanding would find but little hindrance in its search after the truth. Without it, signs and wonders, and voices from the dead, would speak to them in vain. But unhappily, brethren, this was a preparation, which had long been lacking to those who sat in the seat of Moses. The law and the prophets, indeed, were constantly before them. And, under such masters, they might have trained themselves to an exalted love for the commandments of Jehovah, and might have prepared themselves to embrace a more perfect disclosure of his purposes. Instead of this, however, they suffered their spiritual discernment to be obscured by a cloud of strange and unhallowed fancies, which had been gathering for ages past; till, like a pillar of darkness, it settled down upon the synagogue, and almost hid the countenance of God from his people. Our Saviour, therefore, recalls his hearers to the true method of pursuing their spiritual inquiries. And he assures them, that the eye, which is

<sup>6</sup> James iii. 17.

straining for every glimmering of light from above, shall not be disappointed; and that the feet, which are shod with the preparation of a devout impatience to walk by that light, shall not go astray.<sup>7</sup>

And is not this a truth, which should be inculcated, again and again, on all who desire to know the things which concern their everlasting peace? Yes, beloved, it is most certain that men must love the truth, before they can thoroughly believe it; and that the Gospel has then only a free admission into the assent of the understanding, when it brings a passport from a rightly-disposed will. For the will is the great faculty of dominion, that commands all; that shuts out, and lets in, what objects it pleases; and, in a word, that keeps the keys of the whole soul. So that, if the truths of Christ crucified be the Christian's philosophy, a good life is the Christian's logic; that great instrumental, inductive act, which must guide the mind into the former.<sup>8</sup> 'A good man,' says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, 'when unlearned in secular notices, is like the windows of the temple, narrow without and broad within. He sees not so much of what profits not abroad; but whatsoever is within, and concerns religion and the glorification of

<sup>7</sup> See *Le Bas' Sermons*, vol. ii.

<sup>8</sup> See *South's Sermons*, vol. i.



God, that he sees with a broad inspection. A human learning, without God, is but blindness and ignorant folly. But when it is righteousness dipped in the wells of truth, it is like an eye of gold in a rich garment; or, like the light of heaven, it shows itself by its own splendour. And, to borrow the language of another English divine,<sup>9</sup> ‘He that will find truth, must seek with a free judgment, and a sanctified mind. He that thus seeks shall find. He shall live in truth, and truth shall live in him. It shall be like a stream of living waters, issuing out of his own soul. He shall drink of the waters of his own cistern, and be satisfied. He shall every morning find this heavenly manna lying upon the top of his own soul, and shall be fed with it to eternal life.’

Our Lord, having declared the origin and character of his doctrine, follows up this declaration, by saying to the Jews, in terms of severe rebuke;

*Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*<sup>1</sup>

In going about to kill Him, respecting whom Jehovah had so expressly declared, by the mouth of his servant Moses, that he would “put his

<sup>9</sup> See *John Smith's Select Discourses*, p. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Verse 19.

ords in his mouth," and that the people were to hearken unto the words which he should speak in his name,"<sup>2</sup> the Jews exhibited a most awful instance of disobedience to the *law*, which *Moses* *ad given them*. And, when viewed in connexion, therefore, with the foregoing verses, our Lord's words may be interpreted as follows: By seeking to kill me, you transgress that divine *law*, which was *given to Moses*. By transgressing the divine law, you show that you rebel against the will of God, which is so distinctly revealed in that law. And, by rebelling against the will of God, you show that you are, altogether, incompetent judges of my doctrine.'

Upon hearing the words of the above accusation,

*The people*, ignorant, as we must suppose, of those designs of their rulers, which had now been cherished in their bosoms for eighteen months, *answered and said, Thou hast a devil; who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel; or, one work, at which ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) for, though our Lord spoke in accordance with the usual language of the Jews, who ascribed the appointment of circumcision to Moses, yet he was careful to*

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

remind them, that it was a rite observed long before the time of Moses, having been the seal of the covenant of grace given to the fathers; and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous, or true; (or, as, according to the exact force of the original, it might be still more emphatically rendered seeing that truth is always one,) judge THE true, or righteous judgment.<sup>4</sup>

Surely, as our Lord here seems to say, it must be as consistent with the design of the sabbath to restore health and soundness, both to the body and soul of a poor impotent man, by making him every whit whole on the sabbath-day, as to administer an external rite on that day. Judge not, therefore, by any partial prejudices, or by my external appearance; but judge, rather, according to the spiritual import of the divine law; and pray that you, who have been circumcised with that "circumcision, which is outward in the flesh,"<sup>5</sup> may enjoy 'the true circumcision of the spirit; that your hearts and all your members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal

<sup>3</sup> See verse 18.<sup>4</sup> Verses 20—24.<sup>5</sup> Rom. ii. 28.

lusts, you may in all things obey God's blessed will.' <sup>6</sup>

*Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.*' <sup>7</sup>

These men of Jerusalem here allege, as a pretext for their incredulity, some pretended criterion of the Messiah, which was altogether opposed to the prophetic Scriptures. And because this supposed criterion did not, as they thought, apply to Jesus, they presumptuously declare that they would not receive him, even though their rulers might alter their opinion. So that, according to the spirited paraphrase of Bishop Hall, these inhabitants of Jerusalem seem to say: '*Do our rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? If they do so, sure we think they mis-know him. For we have learnt, that when the Messiah comes, no man shall know or declare his generation. But, as for this man, we know his kindred and pedigree.*'

*Then CRIED Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, with a loud voice, in answer to their*

<sup>6</sup> See the *Collect for the Circumcision.*

<sup>7</sup> Verses 25—27.

whisperings among themselves, *Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am : and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him : for I am from him, and he hath sent me.*<sup>8</sup>

The inhabitants of Jerusalem had spoken of Jesus, as contradistinguished from Christ: *Hoebeit we know THIS MAN whence he is: but when CHRIST cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* And, therefore, Jesus, taking up both parts of their discourse, concedes, in the first place, that they might have some, though a very imperfect and erroneous, knowledge of his outward circumstances on earth: *Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am.* But he denies that they had any true knowledge of him, as *the sent* of the Father: *I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.*

Yes, brethren, he was *from him*, both as his everlasting Son, and as having been ordained, in the counsel of peace, to be “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”<sup>9</sup> And well, therefore, might our Lord affirm, as he does elsewhere, that “no man knoweth the Father, save the Son.”<sup>1</sup> *He knew him, for he was from him.* Moreover, having been thus

<sup>8</sup> Verses 28, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Heb. v. 9.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 27.

“foreordained before the foundation of the world,”<sup>2</sup> He was, in due time, *sent* of the Father. And, by this his mission to a guilty world, in which the good pleasure of the Father was so wonderfully accomplished, he might be said, in another sense, to *know the Father*. For, as the Mediator between God and man, he had a perfect knowledge, or experience, of *the truth*<sup>3</sup> of the Father, and of the fulfilment of his gracious purposes. Jesus therefore adds: *I know him, for he hath sent me*; and I know that *He that sent me is true*.

My christian brethren, such is the emphatic manner in which our Lord assures us that he did not *come of himself*, but that he was *sent* of the Father. And when we consider how the reception of this truth is inseparably connected with our best and highest interests, should we not make it our earnest prayer that, by doing the will of God from the heart, and by walking in all things as becomes his children, we may indeed become experimentally acquainted with Jesus Christ, as *the sent* of the Father? Our Lord has expressly declared that, while the Father has “hid” the great mysteries of the Gospel from the “wise and prudent,” he has “revealed them unto babes.”<sup>4</sup> And it is certain, therefore, that we

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. i. 20.<sup>3</sup> Compare verse 28.<sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 25.

must become as little children, in the whole frame and temper of our minds, before we can know the things which concern our everlasting peace. It was in vain that the Jews witnessed the many mighty works which Jesus performed among them, because they were, for the most part, a disobedient and a gainsaying people. And vain would it be for us to witness, with our bodily eyes, the repetition of such miraculous works, unless the eyes of our understanding had been opened to receive, and our affections sanctified to embrace and ever hold fast, the blessed truths of the Gospel. Let us pray, therefore, that we may be followers of God, and that we may serve him, as dear children, in the spirit of adoption, considering how our Lord has said *If any man WILL DO HIS WILL, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

SECTION XXVII.

CHAP. VII. ver. 30—39.

CONTINUATION OF OUR LORD'S DISCOURSES AT THE  
FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

Our Lord, in that part of his first conference with the Jews at Jerusalem, during the feast of tabernacles, which formed the subject of the last section, upbraided them with the unrighteous judgment which they had formed respecting him. In the present section, we have the narrative of the manner in which that conference terminated, and, also, the substance of our Lord's second public conference with the Jews, which was held on the last day of the above-mentioned feast.

Before relating the latter part of our Lord's first conference, the evangelist thus describes the vain and impotent rage which had been excited in the minds of some who heard him :

*Then they sought to take him : but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.*<sup>1</sup>

Though our Lord had severely rebuked the Jews, and though his presence in the temple

<sup>1</sup> Verse 30.



seemed to afford them an opportunity for seizing him, yet a stronger hand than theirs kept them back, so that *no man laid hands on him*. And the true cause of this restraint is here assigned viz. that *his hour was not yet come*. These words not only declare the power of Christ in restraining the hands of his enemies, but they also plainly show that his mysterious sufferings were to be traced, not to the will of man, but to the counsels of the Everlasting Covenant. The hour of his cross and passion was exactly determined in the decrees of heaven. And since the same decrees have also limited, for each of the sons of men, the bounds of his earthly existence, we are sure that not one of the followers of the Lamb shall ever fall to the earth, how hot soever may be the flame, with which persecution may assail him, except at the season appointed by God's overruling providence.

But while some of our Lord's hearers were only filled with indignation, as they listened to the words of his rebuke, others evinced a readiness to attend to the things which they had seen and heard :

*And many of the people believed on him ; the willing and teachable spirit of the common people being thus placed, by the evangelist, in marked contrast with the proud and obstinate incredulity of the chief men and rulers of the*

**Jews**; and said, *When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?*<sup>2</sup>

Such was the manner, in which the common people attested the power both of the words and works of Jesus. But these reasonings of the multitude only served to add fuel to the flame, which was now raging in the minds of their rulers:

*The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.*<sup>3</sup>

The return of these officers is noticed at the forty-fifth verse. And some expositors, interpreting the language of the evangelist, as denoting that they returned on the same day, conclude that they were not sent to take Jesus, until the last day of the feast. But others are of opinion that they were sent on the day of our Lord's first conference in the temple; and that they did not return to the Pharisees and chief priests on the same day, but that they were enjoined to watch for a favourable opportunity of *laying hands on him*, lest a tumult should be made. According to this opinion, which certainly derives support from what would seem to be the order of time, as pointed out at the thirty-seventh verse, the officers must have been stand-

<sup>2</sup> Verse 31.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 32.

ing amidst the multitude, when our Lord uttered the following words. And although these words had relation to all that heard him, yet they would apply, with more peculiar emphasis, to the persons who had just been sending their emissaries to *lay hands* on Jesus, that they might put him to death.

*Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*<sup>4</sup>

My brethren, if we consider these words as addressed to his persecutors and murderers, even to those who were now actually seeking his life; they will emphatically declare the peculiar tenderness of his love. *Yet a little while am I with you*, says Jesus. Yet, notwithstanding all your designs against my life, your season of grace has not yet passed away. You may now seek my favour and find it. But when my *hour shall be come*, in which I shall *go unto him that sent me*, the wrath which you have been heaping upon yourselves, shall then burst upon you. *Ye shall, then, seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.* That is: Such shall be the troubles, and such the calamities, which shall come on the nation, that you will earnestly desire the coming of the Messiah.

<sup>4</sup> Verses 33, 34.

For you will long for a Deliverer; and you will therefore *seek* for the promised Messiah, that he may bring deliverance. But you shall not *find* him. He will not come, according to your expectations, to aid you. No; you shall seek for me in your scriptures; you shall seek for me in the mazes of your own vain and unauthorized traditions, still cherishing the idle expectation that the temple shall not be destroyed, because, as you suppose, the Lord of that temple has not yet appeared; and you shall *seek* for me among false prophets. But in none of these ways shall you find the true Messiah. Not in the Scriptures, because the veil remains upon your hearts; not in your own vain confidence and ignorant surmises, for the nation cannot escape the impending destruction; and not in any false teachers, for they shall miserably deceive you. I shall be at the right hand of the Father; and *where I am, thither*, with your affections fixed only on earthly things, and with impenitent, unbelieving hearts, *ye cannot come*.

*Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come? <sup>s</sup>*

<sup>s</sup> Verses 35, 36.

Thus does the first conference close with a awful representation of the wilful ignorance and blindness of the Jews, and of their proud disdain of the Gentiles. Though Jesus had plainly said, *I go unto him that sent me*, they perversely inquire, *Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?* In these words they wickedly and scornfully insinuate, that even were Jesus to go among the *dispersed* Jews in foreign countries, who might be supposed to be not so well instructed as the Jews who were dwelling in Judea and at Jerusalem, yet still he would not be able to make any proselytes, even among these; but that he would be constrained to apply himself to the ignorant and foolish Gentiles, to seek disciples among them: a circumstance which, to these proud and haughty scorners, appeared to be utterly incompatible with the true Messiah. *Will he teach the GENTILES?*

But while we contemplate, with grief and amazement, this picture of the desperate wickedness of the human heart, let us consider, at the same time, how admirably the whole narrative of this conference with the Jews is suited to illustrate the particular design of the evangelist in writing this gospel. For if it should be objected that Jesus had hitherto appeared de-

sirous of remaining in a measure concealed from observation, such objection must immediately vanish, when we see him thus coming forward, and placing himself in the most public and frequented part of the holy city, even in the temple itself, and also in the very *midst of the feast* of tabernacles, when the multitude were at leisure to hear him, that he might declare his heavenly doctrine. And, in declaring this doctrine, he uttered things which, if they had not been founded in truth, would have afforded just occasion to the Jews to seize and punish him as a blasphemer and deceiver. But, instead of this, many listened to him with eagerness, and were convinced by the words which he uttered. And the rulers of the Jews, his avowed and implacable enemies, were so overwhelmed with astonishment, that the very multitude perceived how they distrusted their own cause.<sup>6</sup> In all this, it is sufficiently apparent how abundantly Jesus manifested forth his glory to the people of the Jews; and this is what St. John has plainly demonstrated in every part of his gospel.

In the sequel of this section, we have the words of that solemn invitation which Jesus addressed to the Jews, on the last day of the feast, calling upon them to partake of his great salvation. And this may be described as our Lord's second

<sup>6</sup> See verse 26.

conference with the Jews, in the temple, at the feast of tabernacles.

*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any<sup>7</sup> man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)<sup>8</sup>*

The eighth, or last day, of the feast was called the *great day*, not on account of any excellence which it derived from the original institution, but because of certain traditional observances. On the other seven days, the Jews professed to offer sacrifices for the seventy nations of the earth; but on the eighth day they offered sacrifices for themselves. It was a separate solemnity for

<sup>7</sup> 'It is very profitable for us that the evangelist here introduceth our Lord standing, and saying with a loud voice: *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* For we gather hence that it is not one or two persons only who are invited, and that with a low obscure whispering; but that this doctrine is so published unto all men, that it is hidden from no man, save only from him, who, stopping his ears of his own accord, doth not allow an entrance to this loud and clear invitation.'—*Calvin.*

<sup>8</sup> Verses 37—39.

Israel alone, and it was therefore more highly esteemed than any of the others. On this day, a priest drew some water out of the pool of Siloam, in a golden vase, and brought it into the temple. And, at the time of the morning sacrifice, he went up and poured this water, mingled with wine, at the foot of the altar, the people, all the while, singing, with transports of joy, the twelfth chapter of Isaiah, especially the words of the third verse: "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." These words were also sung, as they walked in procession. And it was a common saying among the Jews, that 'he who had not seen the rejoicing on the drawing of this water, had seen no rejoicing at all.' It was probably while they were pouring out the water at the foot of the altar, that our Lord, taking advantage of a ceremony which pointed out, so significantly, the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, *stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

With what delight and thankfulness should we hear this gracious proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he uttered now in the temple, and which he uttered again, not long afterwards, from the throne of his glory, saying :



*Let him that is athirst come : yea, Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*<sup>9</sup> Surely, brethren, had we been permitted to have prescribed to our Lord a form of words in which his kind purposes towards us should have been expressed, we could not have invented any so pathetic, so condescending, and so reviving.<sup>1</sup> He invites us not only to *come*, but to *drink* : yea, not only to come near unto him, but to draw out of his fulness grace for grace, for the strength and the refreshment of our souls. Nor is he content with giving this invitation ; but he adds a word of promise, and says : *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

It is probable that our Lord here refers, generally, to the several prophecies of the Old Testament, which describe the effusion of the Holy Spirit by the Messiah, under the similitude of water. But we may suppose him to refer, more especially, not only to those words of Isaiah which were repeated, in the grand chorus of praise, on this *great day of the feast* ; but, also, to the express declaration of the prophet Zechariah, that “ living waters should go out from Jerusalem.”<sup>2</sup> For since the above passage in Zechariah formed one of those scriptures, which

<sup>9</sup> Rev. xxii. 17.

<sup>1</sup> See Doddridge.

<sup>2</sup> Zech. xiv. 8.

were publicly recited on the first day of the feast of tabernacles, it would be quite fresh in the recollection of his hearers. And what is it that our Saviour gives, as the substance of these prophetic scriptures? *He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* That is; He who truly believeth on Jesus, shall receive the supplies of the Holy Spirit in such abundance, that he shall not only be refreshed himself, but *out of his belly*, or, from within him, (allusion being here made, perhaps, to the promineney of that capacious golden vase, from which the water had just been poured out;) there shall flow, as it were, **RIVERS OF LIVING WATER**, for the joy and the consolation of others.

The evangelist then adds: *This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Certain measures of the influences of the Holy Spirit had been always given, in the conversion and sanctification of the ancient saints and prophets. But its abundant and full effusion was not *given*, until the work of redemption was accomplished, and that dispensation introduced, which was to be emphatically called “the ministry of the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> When the Messiah went up on high, and received gifts for men,

<sup>3</sup> See 2 Cor. iii. 6: Rom. vii. 6; John iv. 23.

then, and not before, were all that *believe in him*, so to *receive the Holy Spirit*, as to possess a clear knowledge of the mysteries of the Gospel, and a full and blessed tranquillity of conscience, from a sense of the entire remission of sins; together with a holy joy and liberty of spirit. For this full measure of the grace of the Holy Spirit was then to be poured down from on high, on all believers, as a sign of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness, and of the establishment of his kingdom on earth. My brethren, that victory has been won; and that kingdom has been established. And *all who believe in Jesus* may now with joy draw water out of those wells of salvation, which our triumphant Messiah has opened, for the comfort and refreshment of his redeemed people: that so they may go on, from strength to strength, until they shall appear every one of them in Zion!

## SECTION XXVIII.

## CHAP. VII. ver. 40—53.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICERS TO THE POWER  
WITH WHICH JESUS SPOKE.

We have considered the words of that gracious invitation, which our Lord addressed to the multitude of the Jews, on the last day of the feast of tabernacles ; when “ he stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

*Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him ; but no man laid hands on him.*<sup>1</sup>

On hearing the gracious words which proceeded

<sup>1</sup> Verses 40—44.

from our Lord, *many of the people* considered that he was either that *prophet*, of whom Moses spake to the fathers, or *the prophet*, who, according to the received notions of the Jewish church, was to be the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah. And *others* of them said, at once. *This is the Christ*; not the prophet of the Messiah, but the Messiah himself. *But some said. Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?* The prophets had declared that the Messiah was to come of the tribe of Judah, and from the family of David, and that he should be born in the *city of Bethlehem*, where *David* had been brought up. And the Jews, therefore, imagining that Jesus had been born in Galilee, concluded that he could not be the Messiah. Had they examined the matter a little more closely, they would have found that the place of his birth had exactly corresponded with the word of prophecy. But, for lack of this necessary examination, they continued in unbelief, and rejected the Lord that bought them. They were led away, as thousands in every age have suffered themselves to be led away, by common report. And, being prejudiced against the truth, they refused to give it a fair and impartial hearing, or to inquire for themselves. *So there was a divi-*

*on among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but "his hour was not yet come;"*<sup>2</sup> and, therefore, *no man laid hands on him.*

*Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*<sup>3</sup>

These officers had followed him for several days, seeking for a proper opportunity to seize him, and thinking that they might be able to fix upon him some charge of blasphemy or sedition. But the more they had listened, the more they had been convinced of his innocence, purity, and consummate wisdom. They returned, therefore, to make their report to the chief priests and Pharisees, who were again assembled in council, and who, like the "evening wolves"<sup>4</sup> spoken of by the prophet Zephaniah, were eagerly expecting their prey. Upon seeing the officers return without Jesus, they indignantly said to them, *Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.* For they had been listening to Him, respecting whom John the Baptist had said, so emphatically: "He that cometh from above is above all:" yea, "he whom God hath

<sup>2</sup> Verse 30.

<sup>3</sup> Verses 45, 46.

<sup>4</sup> Zeph. iii. 3.

sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”<sup>5</sup>

And very remarkable was the testimony which was thus borne to the power, with which Jesus had spoken. For these officers had imbibed from their superiors, to whose learning and authority they were accustomed to pay the utmost possible deference, the strongest prejudices against Jesus. And yet, after hearing Jesus speak, all their prejudices were at once laid aside. These men had gone forth filled with rage against our Lord ; and they had found many persons exasperated against him, and ready to assist them in laying hands on him. And yet, after listening to Jesus, so completely had their hatred been turned into admiration, that they now said openly to those who had sent them : *Never man spake like this man* ; thus placing him, at once, above those very teachers, whose word they had hitherto regarded as law. Yes, brethren, they felt that no man had ever spoken with so much grace, power, majesty, and eloquence. They had never listened to a discourse so affecting, and so persuasive. The greatness of the subject, made visible, as it were, by the Divine speaker, had filled their understandings. The manner, also, in which the doctrines were delivered, had

<sup>5</sup> Chap. iii. 31 and 34.

etreated their hearts, even “as the small rain  
on the tender herb, and as the showers upon  
grass.”<sup>5</sup> And, in one word, the gracious  
words which had fallen from the lips of Jesus,  
and entirely disarmed the rage, and subdued the  
ills, of the very men who had been sent to take  
him.

And happy, indeed, are they, who can add  
their testimony to that of the officers, and say:  
*Never man spake like this man.* Happy, indeed,  
are they, who, through grace, are enabled to hear  
Jesus, with calm and thankful attention, while  
his voice still sounds in his word. Yea, happy,  
indeed, are they, of whom it may be said, that  
they “know the joyful sound.”<sup>6</sup> He speaks of  
gladness, of holiness, and of salvation, to all who  
have ears to hear. And, when his grace opens  
the heart, the poorest and the simplest of his  
hearers can perceive the beauty, taste the sweet-  
ness, and admire the power of his word. But, as  
long as the heart shall remain locked up in the  
coldness and darkness of unbelief, all the sup-  
posed advantages of learning or of station only  
present so many obstacles to the admission of  
the truth.

And thus it was, alas! in the instance be-  
fore us.

*Then answered them the pharisees, Are ye also*

<sup>5</sup> Deut. xxxii. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Psal. lxxxix. 15.



*deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the pharisees believed on him? But this people, which knoweth not the law, are cursed.*<sup>7</sup>

We have already seen<sup>8</sup> that Jesus had been blasphemously charged, by some, with being a “deceiver,” or seducer, of the “people.” And it is in perfect consistency, therefore, with such a charge, that the pharisees now say to the officers, *Are ye also deceived, or seduced?* And mark the emphasis of the word *also*. For, by using it, the pharisees admitted that others, even the body of the people, as appears from the forty-ninth verse, had followed Jesus; though, at the same time, they would fix it, as a peculiar reproach, upon their own officers, that they, who had, for their superiors, the highest expounders of the law, should *also* have lent an ear to one, who taught contrary to their traditions. It might have been supposed that they would rather have interrogated their officers respecting the things which Jesus had said, and which had produced such an astonishing effect. But, in the blindness and perverseness of their hearts, they had entitled him a seducer. And they chose to conclude, therefore, that such a person could not possibly have uttered anything worthy of their attention.

But, as if afraid to take any stronger measures against their officers, for this act of disobedience

<sup>7</sup> Verses 47—49.

<sup>8</sup> Verse 12.

to their authority, *the chief priests and pharisees* content themselves with thus upbraiding them, and with following up this rebuke by an argument, not bearing upon the real merits of the case, but derived solely from the quality of those persons who had attended to the things which Jesus had uttered : *Have any of the rulers or of the pharisees believed on him ? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.* In these words, not only are the followers of our Lord spoken of with contempt, but a severe sentence is pronounced against them. For it is, as if the pharisees had said : ‘ They who believe in him, all belong to that illiterate multitude, which knoweth not the law. And therefore, they are not to be regarded, as they are all under a curse.’ Thus proudly, and disdainfully, and uncharitably, did the pharisees speak of those who had not been instructed in their schools, or made acquainted with their interpretations of the scriptures. In describing all such, as a *people, who knoweth not the law*, and therefore as worthy of perdition, they might seem, indeed, to magnify themselves as zealous for the honour of the law. But, in very truth, the language which they thus employed, only served to cover them with shame and confusion ; seeing that they were, themselves, the unfaithful pastors, through whose pride and negligence the people had remained in such igno-

rance of the law. It was, assuredly, the business of the pharisees and rulers to see that the people were taught. But, as our Lord observes elsewhere, they had "taken away the key of knowledge: they entered not in themselves, and them that were entering in, they hindered."<sup>9</sup>

The officers would seem to have listened, in silence, to the words of this rebuke. But though they did not attempt to answer a word, one of the pharisees themselves came forward to vindicate the cause of Jesus.

*Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*<sup>1</sup>

The pharisees had just said to the officers: *Have any of the rulers or of the pharisees believed on him?* And therefore the evangelist reminds us, that Nicodemus was *one of them*. Indeed, he has already introduced him to our notice, both as "a ruler," and "a pharisee."<sup>2</sup> And in now coming forward, Nicodemus proved to the other members of the council, how false was their declaration, that no one of their order had hitherto believed on him. For it was thus graciously ordered by Him, whose watchful providence had preserved Moses, in the palace of Pharaoh; Obadiah, the guardian of the prophets;

<sup>9</sup> Luke xi. 52.<sup>1</sup> Verses 50, 51.<sup>2</sup> Chap. iii. 1.

in the court of Ahab; and Daniel, under Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; that, even in this unjust and impious assembly, one should be found, who, though alone, might yet lift up his voice in the cause of justice and truth. When the evangelist mentions, also, that it was he who *came to Jesus by night*, he shows that that remarkable interview had not been in vain; but that, by the grace of God, Nicodemus was now enabled to stem the opposing tide, and to arrest the hands of his companions by the authority of the law. For he now appeals to them, and says: *Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?* And, in uttering these words, Nicodemus, in effect, preferred against the other members of the council, the severe, though well-merited charge, that, while they professed such a knowledge of the law, and such a zeal respecting it, they either knew not, or regarded not, some of its plainest precepts; and that they were even unmindful of those very rules, which every court of judicature should obviously regard as its peculiar concern.<sup>3</sup>

But the pharisees, like “deaf adders,” stopped their ears against the “voice of the charmer.”<sup>4</sup> And, while they proudly censured the people as ignorant and accursed, and gloried in their own superior wisdom, they “rejected the counsel of

<sup>3</sup> See *Doddridge*.

<sup>4</sup> *Psa. lviii. 4, 5.*

God against themselves ;”<sup>5</sup> rashly judging without serious inquiry, and weakly borne down by idle prejudices against names and places, which is all that the senate of Israel opposes to the same argument of Nicodemus.

*They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*<sup>6</sup>

This conclusion has been justly described, by Calmet, both as false and impertinent. It was false, because Jonah was of Gath-hepher, in Galilee.<sup>7</sup> The prophet Nahum was also a Galilean, for he was of the tribe of Simeon. And some suppose that Malachi was of the same country. But the conclusion was also impertinent, even if it had been true. For the argument seemed to imply, that, because there had not, hitherto, been a prophet from a particular place, therefore no prophet could arise from thence at any future time. And what was this but either to forget, or to deny, the important truth, that all places are within the reach of God’s good providence, and that he freely calls whom he will?

But this was all which the members of the council could say, in justification of the course they were pursuing; and they did not wait for

<sup>5</sup> Luke vii. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Verse 52.

<sup>7</sup> See 2 Kings xiv. 25.

an answer. For, as the evangelist adds, in conclusion :

*Every man went unto his own home.*<sup>8</sup>

Thus abruptly terminated the deliberations of that assembly, which had met together to adopt measures for taking Jesus, who was then teaching, before their eyes, in the midst of the temple. They were armed, too, with all the power of the state. And yet, so plain had been the indications of the Divine majesty and the Divine mission of Jesus, that these his enemies were confounded, not only by one of their own body, but even by those who served under their authority. In all this we plainly trace the finger of Him, who not only restraineth the wrath of men, but “turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.”<sup>9</sup> And surely, therefore, as we contemplate the issue of these deliberations, and observe how “the devices of the crafty” were “disappointed,” so that they “could not perform their enterprise,”<sup>1</sup> we must feel constrained to say, with the psalmist, “This hath God done :” for we must “perceive that it is his work.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Verse 53.

<sup>9</sup> Isa. xlv. 25.

<sup>1</sup> Job v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Psa. lxiv. 9.

## SECTION XXIX.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 1—11.

## THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

After having related the circumstances which occurred on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, the evangelist tells us that

*Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.*<sup>1</sup>

It is not improbable that our Lord went every evening to Bethany, on the east side of the mount, to the house of Martha and Mary, where he was more retired than he could have been in the city; though some suppose that he spent this night in devotion on the west side of the mount, in the garden of Gethsemane, to which he was accustomed to resort. We find, however, that he desired to deliver another public discourse, before the multitude, now assembled at Jerusalem, should begin to disperse. For,

*Early in the morning, he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.*<sup>2</sup>

‘He had found no such fair success the day be-

<sup>1</sup> Verse 1.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 2.

fore. For we know that the multitude had been divided in their opinion respecting him; and we have seen that messengers had been sent to apprehend him. Yet he returns to the temple. Yea, this Sun of Righteousness prevents that other sun; and shines early, with wholesome doctrines, upon the souls of his hearers. *Early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came again unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.*<sup>3</sup>

But, while Jesus was thus employed in teaching the people, an insidious device was employed against him, by those persons, who, having failed in their attempts to overpower him by the weight of their authority, now had recourse to deceit; hoping that they might thus excite against Jesus the suspicions and the angry passions of the multitude, who were now listening, with delight, to the truths which he uttered.

*And the scribes and pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.*<sup>4</sup>

Yes, brethren, all this was done, by these in-

<sup>3</sup> *Bishop Hall's Contemplations.*

<sup>4</sup> Verses 3—6.



veterate enemies of our Lord, only because they desired to *tempt him, that they might have to accuse him*. And, for this purpose, the woman is brought, ‘not to the Mount of Olives, not to the way, not to the place where Jesus dwelt; but to the temple, and not to some obscure angle of the temple, but before the face of the assembly!’<sup>5</sup> There it was that the scribes and pharisees brought the woman; *and, when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?*

How artful was the plan here laid, either for embroiling our Lord with the civil power, or for casting reproach upon his character. As our Lord did not assume any judicial authority, he could not with any propriety give judgment in the case. Had he done so, it might have been considered an invasion of the rights and office of the civil magistrate, and it would have afforded them ground, therefore, for accusing him to the Romans. On the other hand, had he acquitted the woman, they would have represented him to the people, not only as setting aside the law of Moses, but as being the patron of the most infamous characters. And, even had our Lord contented himself with referring them to the

<sup>5</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

Roman authority, they would have accused him to the multitude, as a betrayer of their liberties. ‘What a crafty bait, then, is here laid for our Saviour. It seems to them impossible that he should avoid a deep prejudice, either to his justice or to his mercy. For thus they imagine: Either Christ will second Moses, in sentencing this woman to death; or else he will cross Moses, in dismissing her unpunished. If he command her to be stoned, he loses the honour of his clemency and mercy. If he appoint her dismissal, he loses the honour of his justice. And, if stripped of either of these, he can be no Saviour!’<sup>6</sup>

But, if the plan was artfully laid, never was more wisdom or more knowledge of human nature displayed than in the manner in which our Lord met it. For he, at once, overwhelmed his adversaries with confusion, by unmasking their hearts, and by exposing their private abominations.

*But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Bishop Hall.

<sup>7</sup> Verses 6—8.

‘ Our Lord’s very action seems to say ; I was loth to have shamed you ; and therefore could have been willing, not to have heard your ill-meant motion. But since you will needs have it, and since you will, by your vehemence, force my justice, I must tell you, that there is not one of you but is as faulty, as she whom ye accuse. There is no difference, but that your sin is smothered in secrecy ; hers is brought forth into the light. Ye had more need to make your own peace by an humble repentance, than to urge severity against another.’<sup>s</sup>

It is evident, brethren, that our Lord does not here make any provision, respecting judges and witnesses, that they should not accuse and condemn malefactors, unless they be altogether guiltless themselves. For that would altogether disannul civil government, which is expressly declared to be “the ordinance of God.”<sup>9</sup> But leaving the case now referred to him, to be dealt with according to the provisions of the law of Moses, our Lord contents himself with putting to shame these base hypocrites, who were severe censurers of others, while they themselves were spotted with many sins, and wicked tempters of Christ : *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* He does not say : ‘ Let her not be stoned ;’ for that would have been

<sup>s</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

<sup>9</sup> Rom. xiii. 2.

contrary to the law. Neither does he say: 'Let her be stoned;' for that would have been against the course of his mercy, and the nature of his ministry; since he came not to destroy, but to save. He so replied, therefore, that 'both his justice and his mercy are entire.'<sup>1</sup> And a divine power attended his word, which, for the present, disarmed the malice of his enemies. For

*They which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*<sup>2</sup>

Yes, beloved, such was the secret energy of our Redeemer's words, that the *eldest* among these pharisees, hypocritical and vain-glorious as they were, were the first to confess their guilt, by withdrawing from the presence of so holy a prophet, from the temple of God, and from the criminal whom they came to persecute: *Being convicted by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.* 'No sooner, then, do these hypocrites hear of their sins from the mouth of Christ, than they are gone! Had they been sincerely touched with a true remorse, they would have rather come to him upon their knees, and have said: Lord, we know and find that thou knowest our secret sins. This argues thy divine omniscience.

<sup>1</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

<sup>2</sup> Verse 9.

Thou that art able to know our sins, art able to remit them. O pardon the iniquities of thy servants. Thou, that accusest us, do thou also acquit us. But now, instead hereof, they turn their back upon their Saviour, and haste away. An impenitent man cares not how little he hath either of the presence of God, or of the mention of his sins. O fools! if ye could run away from God, it were somewhat. But while ye move in him, what do ye? Whither go ye? Ye may run from his mercy; ye cannot but run upon his judgment.\*

Thus was Jesus *left alone* by all the accusers and the woman standing in the midst of the crowd with which he had been surrounded, before she was brought in. 'Yes, there yet stands the mournful adulteress. She might have gone forth with them; nobody constrained her to stay. But that which sent them away, stayed her; CONSCIENCE. She knew her guiltiness was publicly accused, and durst not be by herself denied. As one that was therefore fastened there by her own guilty heart, she stirs not till she may receive her dismissal. And how well was it for this sinner to be left there! For could she be in a safer place, than before the tribunal of a Saviour? Might she have chosen her refuge, whither should she rather have fled? O happy we, if,

\* *Bishop Hall.*

when we are convinced in ourselves of our sins, we can set ourselves before that Judge, who is our Surety, our Advocate, our Redeemer, our Ransom, our Peace.' <sup>4</sup>

*When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? i. e. Hath no man proceeded to the act expressive of judicial condemnation? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: i. e. Neither do I pass any sentence of judicial condemnation, or interfere, in any degree, with the magistrate's office: go, and sin no more.* <sup>5</sup>

He thus passed by the external judgment, which belonged to the constituted civil authorities; and insisted only upon the inward condemnation of the conscience, to bring her to repentance. And, in so doing, he, in effect, fulfilled the work of the law and the Gospel together. For he spake as One, to whom all her sins were fully revealed. But he spake, also, as One, who, if she felt the remembrance of those sins to be grievous unto her, and the burden of them to be intolerable, would, at once, deliver her from their guilt and power, and would give rest to her soul: *Neither do I CONDEMN thee*, says Jesus: *go, and SIN NO MORE.* Had sentence been passed legally

<sup>4</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

<sup>5</sup> Verses 10, 11.

upon the adulteress, doubtless our Saviour would not have acquitted her. For as he would not, on the one hand, intrude upon the offices of others, so neither, on the other hand, would he have crossed or violated the ordinary course of justice. But, now that her *accusers* had sunk away abashed and confounded, and that no public sentence of condemnation had been against her, he said unto her: NEITHER DO I condemn thee.

‘ And yet, Lord, dost thou show favour to foul offenders? Art thou rather pleased, that gross sins should be blanced, and sent away with a gentle connivancy? Far, far be this from the perfection of thy justice. He that hence argues adulteries not to be punishable, let him argue the unlawfulness of dividing inheritances, because, in the case of the two wrangling brethren, thou saidst, “ Who made me a divider of inheritances ? ” <sup>6</sup> Thou declinedst the office, thou didst not dislike the act, either of parting lands, or punishing offenders. And, herein, hadst thou respect to thy calling, and to the main purpose of thy coming into the world. For this was neither to be an arbiter of civil causes, nor a judge of criminal, but to be a Saviour of mankind; not to destroy the body, but to save the soul. And this was thy care with respect to this

<sup>6</sup> See Luke xii. 14.

miserable offender; *Go, and sin no more.* Oh! how can we ever enough magnify thy mercy, who takest no pleasure in the death of a sinner? yea, who so camest to save, that thou challengest us of unkindness for being miserable: “Why<sup>7</sup> will ye die, O house of Israel?”<sup>8</sup>

Such, brethren, was the issue of the conference which our Lord had with the pharisees, and with the woman whom they had brought before him. And may we not regard this conference with her, and with her treacherous accusers, as a detached, but faithful, specimen of his whole conduct upon earth; as a brief, but satisfactory precedent of that heavenly jurisprudence, by which he regulates his everlasting kingdom? The scribes and pharisees demanded her death; for hypocrisy is always cruel. But the Son of man declined giving sentence after the ordinances and decisions of earthly tribunals; for he came, not as a ruler, or as a judge, but “to seek and to save that which was lost.”<sup>9</sup> He knew that her heart might yet be touched: he knew that her soul might yet be rescued from perdition. He spake, therefore, to convert and to save. He employed, not the chilling language of reproof, but the calm voice of gentleness and peace. And he thus engaged her to begin and persevere in a

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xviii. 31.

<sup>8</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

<sup>9</sup> Luke xix. 10.



new and holy course, by the mildest, and, therefore, the most irresistible, energies of mercy: *Neither do I condemn thee ; go, and sin no more!*

‘ But,’ to conclude with the devout meditation of Bishop Hall, ‘ O Son of God, though thou wouldst not then be a judge, yet thou wilt one be ! Thou wouldest not, in thy first coming judge the sins of men ; thou wilt come to judge them, in thy second. Yea, the time shall come when, upon that just and glorious tribunal, thou shalt judge every man according to his works. That we may not, one day, hear thee say : “ Go, ye cursed ;” let us now hear thee say : *Go, and sin no more.*’

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## SECTION XXX.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 12—20.

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

We were told, at the second verse, that it was “early in the morning” when Jesus came into the temple and taught.

*Then spake Jesus again unto the people, saying,*

<sup>1</sup> See *Bishop Jebb's Discourse on John viii. 11.*

and pointing, perhaps, to the rising sun, whose beams might be then entering the temple, *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*<sup>1</sup>

That is; I am that true light of the world, in whose appearance you ought chiefly to rejoice. For this sun, which is now rising upon the earth, shall, in a few hours, descend again; and it may fail many of you, who are about to return home, before you reach your several habitations. But he that *followeth me*, shall not be left to walk in the *darkness* of ignorance, error, and sin. He shall have the *light of life* continually shining upon him, to diffuse over his soul knowledge, holiness, and joy; and he shall be guided by it to eternal happiness.

We know, brethren, that nothing is better suited to gladden the eyes of the children of men, than the diffusion of light throughout the earth. And we can well understand, therefore, why the image of light, that

‘ Offspring of heav’n first-born,’<sup>2</sup>

upon which our knowledge, our joys, and our very life so much depend, should be so frequently employed, in scripture, to represent to us the Saviour of the world. Prophecy had scarcely

<sup>1</sup> Verse 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Milton.*

opened the organs of her blissful vision, when :  
 "Star" was seen coming out of "Jacob,"<sup>3</sup> as  
 the light of the Lord, in which we should see  
 light. And when upon her harp she sent forth  
 in its most rapturous tones, the proclamation of  
 his coming, she sang of him, as a light to "the  
 people who walked in darkness," and as shining  
 upon them, who "dwelt in the land of the  
 shadow of death."<sup>4</sup> His harbinger's errand was  
 to give knowledge of the tender mercy of God,  
 whereby "the day-spring from on high hath  
 visited us."<sup>5</sup> And, when the venerable Simeon  
 first discerned him in the earthly temple, he  
 hailed him as "a light to lighten the Gentiles."<sup>6</sup>  
 And, surely, there is no language by which the  
 Saviour's divine and mediatorial glory, and our  
 interest in his coming, can be more happily and  
 more beautifully expressed. All the inspired  
 writers, as it were with one mind, conceived of  
 him, under the sublime image of a luminary,  
 shedding light and life, knowledge and joy, upon  
 mankind. And he himself here invites us to  
 contemplate him under the same figure, by say-  
 ing, in these emphatic words : *I am the light of  
 the world.*

We may suppose, that, in uttering these  
 words, our Lord had respect chiefly to those pro-

<sup>3</sup> Numb. xxiv. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. ix. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Luke i. 78.

<sup>6</sup> Luke ii. 32.

phetic scriptures, which Simeon applied to him, when he declared him to be “the light of the Gentiles.” And, when considered in this point of view, our Saviour’s language is more particularly deserving of our consideration; inasmuch as he thus distinctly declares himself to be the true and adorable Messiah; the Redeemer, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. Yea, to those very persons, who had taken offence at his conversing with publicans and sinners, he thus clearly declares himself to be that true *light*, which, without any distinction of persons, was to diffuse its blessed influence to the remotest corners of the earth. Our Lord adds, concerning those who chose perversely to close their hearts against the admission of this light, that they should *walk in darkness*, even as the Egyptians, when Pharaoh and his host pursued after the children of Israel. But *he that followeth me*, says Jesus, *shall have the light of life*. That is; He shall have such a *light*, as brings and supports *life*. For he shall find me to be the fountain of all spiritual *life*; and the *light*, which he derives from me, shall lead him to *life* eternal. Yea, my *light* shall bring *life* with it; so that they, who walk in my *light*, shall live in my *life*; having my Spirit to “bear witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 16.

*The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.<sup>1</sup>*

In these words, some of the Pharisees, who were then present, plainly betrayed their rage at the disappointment which their brethren had just experienced. But our Lord proceeds immediately to refute this objection of the Pharisees; showing, first, that even were he to admit that, in a certain sense, he *bore witness of himself*, still his testimony ought to be received; and showing, secondly, that he had another testimony, even the testimony of the Father.

Our Lord shows, in the first place, that even were he to admit that, in a certain sense, he *bore witness of himself*, still his testimony ought to be received.

*Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me,<sup>9</sup>*

That is; Although, in ordinary cases, a man's testimony concerning himself avails nothing, yet it is otherwise in the case of One, who is light and truth itself; it is otherwise with One, who *came* forth from the Father, and who *goeth* to him again.

<sup>1</sup> Verse 13.

<sup>9</sup> Verses 14—16.

As the light shines of itself, and does not need anything else to proclaim its brightness; so have my words power of themselves to penetrate the hearts and consciences of my hearers. But this light will not avail those, who have closed their eyes against its beams. *And ye, therefore, cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go*, because ye remain wilfully ignorant of these things, and refuse to receive my testimony. Yea; *ye judge after the flesh*; ye judge and condemn me only from carnal considerations and appearances. But *I judge no man*; as I have just shown, in the case of the woman taken in adultery. I interfere with no civil judgment, and do not, in my office of Mediator, at present condemn or punish any one. For I am come, not to destroy, by judgment and condemnation, but to save, by instruction, exhortation, and conversation. I am come that I may call sinners to repentance and salvation. *And yet if I judge*, as by my doctrine I do,<sup>1</sup> though I exercise no civil authority, *my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me*. We are one, both as to the divine essence, and as to the perfect union of will which, in the economy of redemption, subsists between the Father who ordained, and the Son, who has been *sent* to execute, the counsel of peace toward a rebellious world.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Jer. xv. 19 with 1 Pet. i. 7.

And thus was our Saviour led to touch upon the other part of the objection of the Pharisees and to show that they were altogether wrong in asserting that he *bore witness only of himself*, seeing that he enjoyed another testimony, even the testimony of the Father.

*It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.*<sup>2</sup>

That is ; It is evident that, according to your own rules, my Messiahship is not destitute of sufficient attestation ; since I myself, as a divine person, assert it ; and my Father, by his prophets, and by his immediate declarations from heaven, as well as by many other signs, hath attested it also.

Thus, while our blessed Lord repeats the declaration which he had made, at the fourteenth verse, as to the right which he possessed, as God, to bear witness in his own cause, he, at the same time, establishes his Deity by a new argument. For he distinctly asserts the joint testimony of the Father and the Son ; and thus plainly declares his own testimony to possess the same authority, and the same infallibility with that of the Father : *I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of*

<sup>2</sup> Verses 17, 18.

Yes, brethren, it is plain, from this passage, that the Father and the Son are two distinct persons, for their respective testimonies are here taken of as the testimonies of two several persons; but it is equally plain that these two must be one; not only one in their testimony, but equal in power and glory, and therefore the same in substance. And I may here mention that St. Augustine takes occasion, from this very passage, to caution his hearers, on the one hand, against Sabellianism, which confounded the persons in the Godhead, and, on the other, against Arianism, which denied the Godhead of the Son. ‘The Son,’ he says, ‘is one person, and the Father is another. They do not, however, constitute two Beings. But the Father and the Son are the same Being, i. e. the one only true God.’

The Pharisees now showed how truly our Lord had described them, as *judging after the flesh*. For, on hearing the above words of Jesus, as if they would strengthen the prejudice against his cause, by making it appear that he referred to some unknown and absent witness;

*They said unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*<sup>3</sup>

That is; Notwithstanding repeated instruc-

<sup>3</sup> Verse 19.



tions, ye continue wilfully ignorant of my person and office, and of my heavenly Father, from whom I come to you. If ye had considered me as one in nature, counsel, and operation with him, ye would have seen his perfections shining forth in me, and ye would have discerned the relation in which he stands to me, as his Son, and his mediatorial servant. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."<sup>4</sup> If, therefore, ye had received my teaching, ye would have had a knowledge of the nature and attributes of God, such as ye never could have had, and never can have, in any other way. For his nature and perfections never can be properly known to the children of men, but in the light of that Gospel which proclaims salvation to a guilty world.

Thus did our blessed Lord, in refuting the objection of the Pharisees, expose their wilfulness and perverseness in remaining ignorant of the excellence of these Divine witnesses. And it is evident that such ignorance on their part was altogether without excuse, since they professed to be acquainted with those writings of Moses and the prophets, which so plainly "testify of Christ,"<sup>5</sup> and since they ought, therefore, to have been the first to understand that adorable

<sup>4</sup> Chap. i. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Chap. v. 39.

mystery of the Father and the Son, which is the epitome of all divine wisdom, and the key of all divine knowledge.

O dwell, brethren, on the mystery which has been thus graciously revealed to us, and to which the soul of the believer turns, for comfort and for peace, amidst all the trials and the afflictions of this unquiet world, and pray that you may embrace, and ever hold fast, the sure and certain hope which is thus held forth to perishing sinners. You have seen, in the passage upon which we have been meditating, how perverse and how irreverent is the spirit which too many betray, when speaking of the things which concern our everlasting peace. But if you turn from the language of the Pharisees, in the present instance, to the words of Philip, on another occasion,<sup>6</sup> you will feel assured that you may always pray to be instructed in the great mystery of the Gospel, when your prayer proceeds not out of feigned lips. If you really desire, therefore, *to know the Father*, draw near, with a believing reliance on the merits of his dear Son, and the Father will reveal himself to you, in that Son, as “reconciling” a guilty “world unto himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them.”<sup>7</sup> Yea, beloved, let Christ be “all your salvation and all your desire;”<sup>8</sup> and, as you rejoice, more and

<sup>6</sup> Chap. xiv. 8.    <sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.    <sup>8</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

more, in the riches of his grace, and in the sufficiency of his mediatorial work, you will assuredly feel that, in *knowing him, you know the Father also*. ‘Blessed words,’ says Chrysostom. ‘We cannot say: ‘He that knows a man, knows an angel;’ or, ‘He that knows a creature, knows the Creator;’ but we may say: ‘He that knows CHRIST, KNOWS THE FATHER ALSO.’<sup>9</sup>

*These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.*<sup>1</sup>

It is here evidently noticed, as a remarkable circumstance, that, notwithstanding our Lord’s

‘Whosoever he be that aspireth unto God, and beginneth not at Christ, must needs wander in a labyrinth. For it is not in vain that he is called the image of the Father. And as they are deprived of all true knowledge of God, who, passing over Christ, do strive like giants to come unto heaven; so, whosoever shall direct his mind and all his senses unto Christ, he shall straightway be led unto the Father. For the apostle doth not falsely say,\* that, through the glass of the Gospel, we do plainly behold God in the person of Jesus Christ. This is, indeed, an incomparable reward of the obedience of faith, that he who humbleth himself before Christ, doth pierce above all the heavens, even unto the mysteries which angels behold and adore.’—*Calm.*

<sup>1</sup> Verse 20.

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\* Compare 2 Cor. iii. 18, with 2 Cor. iv. 6.

clear declaration as to the unity of the Father and the Son, *no one* should have dared to *lay hands on him*. Nay, he had not only declared that God was his Father, but he had also charged the Jews with being altogether ignorant of Him, in whom they boasted, as being so peculiarly their God. And yet their spirits were kept under such a powerful, though secret, restraint, that *no one laid hands on him*. The place, in which he had spoken, was frequented by his greatest enemies, and their minds were more than ever exasperated against him; but still *no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come*. And here, therefore, we plainly discern our Lord's mysterious exercise of that almighty power, which could effectually restrain the fury of his enemies, until the hour was come in which, according to the counsels of the everlasting covenant, he was to be delivered into their hands, that he might die a willing sacrifice for the sins of men!

## SECTION XXXI.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 21—32.

IT IS THE TRUTH THAT MAKETH FREE.

The course of the sacred narrative has brought us to the fourth conference which Lord had with the Jews, during his presence to Jerusalem. In this conference, the action which extends to the end of this chapter Lord first utters a general admonition respecting the danger of unbelief;<sup>1</sup> after which, he addresses, more particularly, three different classes of hearers; instructing the ignorant;<sup>2</sup> strengthening and encouraging those who believe;<sup>3</sup> severely rebuking those who continued obstinate in impenitence and unbelief.<sup>4</sup>

The conference opens with a few, but very emphatic words, evidently addressed to the Pharisees with whom he had been already conversing.

*Then said Jesus again unto them, I go and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your whither I go, ye cannot come.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Verses 21—24.      <sup>2</sup> Verses 25—29.      <sup>3</sup> Verse 30.<sup>4</sup> Verses 33—59.<sup>5</sup> Verse 2

Our Lord here repeats, in substance, what he had said on the preceding day,<sup>6</sup> when the officers came from the Pharisees and chief priests to take him. On the present occasion, however, he speaks, in plainer terms, of the judgment which awaited his impenitent enemies : *Ye shall die in your sins* ; or, as it is expressed, still more emphatically, in the original, *in your sin* ; i. e. in your sin of unbelief ; in your sin of rejecting the promised Messiah. And what was it thus *to die in their sin*, but to die unpardoned ; to die unchanged ; to die under the wrath of God, and as vessels of wrath fitted for destruction !

*Then said the Jews*, i. e. not the Pharisees, but some of the multitude who were collected about him, *Will he kill himself? Because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come?*<sup>7</sup>

Instead, therefore, of considering within themselves the full import of the awful denunciation, *Ye shall die in your sins*, the Jews immediately seized upon those other words which, to their dark and perverted minds, seemed to furnish a fresh pretext for casting suspicion upon Jesus : *Will he kill himself? Because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come?*

*And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath,*

<sup>6</sup> Chap. vii. 33, 34.

<sup>7</sup> Verse 22.

*I am from above : ye are of this<sup>8</sup> world ; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins : for if ye believe not that I am he, i. e. He, whom I have declared myself to be ; the true Messiah ; the promised Seed ; the Light of the world ; the Bread of life ; the Heavenly Manna ; the Son of God, ye shall die in your sins.<sup>9</sup>*

In this solemn admonition to the Jews, our Lord first explains the words which had occasioned their wicked insinuation. *Whither they could not come, because they were from beneath ; while He was from above.* Jesus then declares to them his divine excellency. And when He adds : *Ye are of this world, I am not of this world,* He declares to them his perfect, unspotted holiness. Our Lord then recalls their attention to the words of that awful denunciation which they had appeared altogether to disregard : *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins ; for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.* And thus does Jesus solemnly warn them to beware, lest, while they perversely suspected him of wishing to destroy himself, they themselves should be hereafter

<sup>8</sup> It plainly follows, from the expression, *Ye are of this world, I am not of THIS world*, that there must be ANOTHER WORLD.—*Bengelius* in loc.

<sup>9</sup> Verses 23, 24.

condemned as having destroyed their own souls. You will observe, however, on comparing the above words with the twenty-first verse, that our Lord now speaks, not, as in the former instance, absolutely, saying, *Ye shall die in your sins* ; but only conditionally, saying, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*. In the one case, he was addressing the Pharisees, who, as he foresaw, would remain obstinately impenitent and unbelieving ; in the other, he was speaking to the crowd collected round him. And he knew that, among them, there were some, at least, who would attend to the things which concerned their everlasting peace.

And this view of the scope of our Lord's language is confirmed by that part of the conference, which forms the remaining part of this section, and in which we find him, first, instructing the ignorant, and, then, confirming those who believed.

Observe, therefore, in the first place, with what gentleness and patience our Lord proceeds to instruct the ignorant multitude before him.

*Then said they unto him, Who art thou?* as if they had said, Who art thou, that undertakest to threaten us in this manner? *And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning:* the Light of the world ; the



Bread of life; the Son of God. *I have many things to say, and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.*<sup>1</sup>

That is; I could easily charge you with a multitude of crimes, and condemn you for them: for 'I have matter enough to accuse and condemn you for.'<sup>2</sup> But as that is not my present work, I now only declare unto you, that my Father will assuredly perform all his promises concerning them that believe in me, and all his threatenings against them that reject me. For whatever I say to men, is exactly according to the commission which I have received from him. And 'since my Father that sent me is truth itself, he will certainly make good that which I have delivered to the world FROM HIM, and that which he hath spoken to the world BY ME.'<sup>3</sup>

Such is the ordinary interpretation of the twenty-sixth verse. But there will be an additional emphasis in the passage, if we consider the latter part of the verse, as explaining WHY our Lord did not then inflict on the Jews the judgment which they deserved. It was because *he that sent him is TRUE*; and it had been expressly foretold, of the promised Messiah, that, when

<sup>1</sup> Verses 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Bishop Hall's Paraphrase.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

sent for the redemption of his people, he should proclaim "the acceptable year of the Lord," as preceding "the day of vengeance of our God."<sup>4</sup> *I*, therefore, says Jesus, who *speak to the world those things which I have heard of the Father*, abstain, as his Ambassador and Servant, from accusing or condemning you. For I am come to speak only the words of life and salvation; and am He, of whom the prophet Isaiah said: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."<sup>5</sup>

The evangelist now adds, as if in astonishment at the blindness and ignorance of his hearers;

*They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.*<sup>6</sup>

But still this was an ignorance which, with some of them, at least, was not, as in the case of the Pharisees, accompanied by a spirit of malignant and unrelenting hatred. And our Lord, therefore, thus meekly proceeds with the word of instruction:

*Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And*

<sup>4</sup> Isa. lxi. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xlii. 2, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Verse 27.

*he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things he please him.<sup>7</sup>*

That is; Although ye are ignorant of me now, yet, when once ye shall have crucified me, either the happy influences of my Spirit, or the miseries which shall fall on yourselves and nation, will indeed convince you that I act by my Father's authority, and that I have faithfully declared his doctrines, promises, and threatenings. And meanwhile, my Father, who is one with me in essence, is with me, also, in my Mediatorial office, by the immeasurable unction of his Spirit, and by every token of his favour towards me, who always act agreeably to his will, and for the advancement of his honour.

By the expression of *lifting up the Son of man* our Saviour, according to the interpretation which I have given in the above paraphrase, plainly points to his approaching elevation on the cross. And there was a peculiar beauty and propriety in this allusion to his crucifixion, when addressing those who had taken offence at his appearing in the form of a servant. For he thus emphatically declared to them, that his glory, so far from being obscured by the humble and lowly form in which he had appeared, would, in fact, be most conspicuously displayed, when he should

<sup>7</sup> Verses 28, 29.

have humbled himself to the very lowest stage of self-abasement, by being nailed to the accursed tree.

And observe how striking is the testimony here borne, by Jesus, to the oneness of counsel and action between the Father and the Son. *I do nothing OF MYSELF*, says Jesus, *but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.* And, again, at the close of the twenty-ninth verse, he says, *I do ALWAYS those things that PLEASE HIM.* This language strongly exhibits the Father and the Son as having been ONE, from eternity, in the power and glory of the Divine Majesty. And, in the intermediate clauses, our Lord shows, also, how inseparably he was united with the Father, even while employed on earth in accomplishing the work of redemption: *He that sent me is WITH ME: the Father hath NOT LEFT ME ALONE.*

Dwell, once more, then, with adoring gratitude and love, my brethren, on this mysterious and gracious truth:<sup>a</sup> viz. that the Father and the Son are ONE; in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal. And, when you consider how certain it is that He, who uttered such solemn warnings in the days of his humiliation, will not retract them on the throne of his glory; think, within yourselves, how inevitable must be the conclusion,

<sup>a</sup> See last Section.

that they, who do not believe in him, as being all this, and as being, indeed, more than any words can fully express, will perish in their sins! For Jesus has much *to say and to judge of them*. And all shall know, either by their conversion, or in their condemnation, that he *always* spake and *did those things which pleased the Father*, even when he claimed the highest honours to himself. It is, indeed, freely admitted that the children of God are enabled, through grace, to *do things that please him*. But all believers will confess, as with one voice, that “in many things they offend all.”<sup>9</sup> Who, then, except Jesus, ever did, or ever could, truly say, *I ALWAYS do those things that please him?* Or, of whom else, my brethren, do prophets and apostles ever speak in such terms? And yet this is their uniform testimony to Jesus of Nazareth, who is thus acknowledged to stand ALONE, as without blemish, and without spot, among all others of the sons of men!

The evangelist now proceeds to state that,

*As he spake these words, many believed on him.*<sup>1</sup>

Yes, brethren, such was the convincing nature and such the force of the truths, which Jesus now uttered to the multitude assembled before him, that *many believed on him*, as the Messiah, and received his doctrine, though, as we shall afterwards find, many others only became still more

<sup>9</sup> James iii. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Verse 30.

obstinate and hardened, thereby illustrating the remarkable observation made by Augustine, that ‘the same sun which softens the wax, hardens the clay.’

On perceiving the salutary effect produced on *many* who heard him, our Lord directed a word of exhortation immediately and expressly to those who believed, that so he might strengthen and confirm them in their faith.

*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.<sup>2</sup>*

That is; ‘I, who know your hearts, do well see, that, upon these words of mine, ye do now believe in me. But take heed that this faith of yours be not unsteady and temporary. See that ye continue constant in the profession of my name; and then ye shall indeed be my disciples. Nay, more than this, ye shall also have the truth of God further revealed unto you. And this divine, evangelical truth, shall so work within you, that it shall bless you with the liberty of the sons of God, making you free from the bondage of sin and Satan, under which ye are now held.’<sup>3</sup>

Brethren, let us consider the word of exhortation

<sup>2</sup> Verses 31, 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Bishop Hall's Paraphrase.*

which is here addressed to ourselves. For our Lord now says to us, as he once said to these believing Jews: *CONTINUE ye in my word*. Attend to my instructions; believe my declarations; rely on my promises; and obey my commandments; notwithstanding all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Yes, beloved, it is not enough to say that we have once professed our belief in Jesus Christ and his word, but we must *CONTINUE in his word*, if we would be *his disciples indeed*. And what is it thus to *continue in his word*? It is, not to have a passing view of it; not to choose only some particular truths; not to practise only a part of the word; not to serve him only for a few hours, or months, or years: but to love all the truths of his word, and, under the constraining influence of his love, to practise them, at all times and under all circumstances; yea, to make his law our joy and our delight! ‘O blessed word of Jesus! the abode of the Christian; the place of happiness and peace; the strong tower, where we may take refuge from every care and every danger; the sacred temple, where we may adore God, in spirit and in truth; the heavenly place, where we possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Happy, indeed, are they, who know what it is to *continue* in this sure dwelling-

place, and, amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, still to find shelter in this “pavilion, from the strife of tongues!”<sup>4</sup>

Of all, who thus *continue in his word*, our Lord declares, as their prerogative, that they *shall know the truth*; and, as their rich reward, that *the truth shall make them free*.

They shall *know the truth*. By the constant teaching of Christ’s word and Spirit, their prejudices shall be removed, their mistakes rectified, their views enlarged, and their doubts and uncertainties precluded; so that they shall experimentally know the divine truth and excellency of his doctrine, and be able to distinguish it from every specious delusion. This shall be their high prerogative.

And this shall be their reward; viz. that *the truth shall make them free*: ‘free FROM their spiritual enemies; free IN the service of God; free to the privileges of sons; and free OF the Jerusalem which is above.’<sup>5</sup> Yea, they shall find that the soul is restored to the government of itself, by being brought back into obedience to its Creator; and their hearts will reply to the truth of the apostle’s observation, that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is LIBERTY.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xxxi. 20. See *Quemel’s Reflections on the New Testament*.

<sup>5</sup> *Matthew Henry*

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.



## SECTION XXXII.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 33—47.

JESUS REBUKING THE PRIDE OF THE UNBELIEVING  
JEWS.

In the preceding part of this fourth conference with the Jews, our Lord, after having warned them, generally, respecting the danger of unbelief, proceeded to teach the ignorant, and to confirm those who believed. But the greater part of his hearers paid no regard whatever to the truths which he had uttered; and our Lord, therefore, in the sequel of this conference, severely rebukes those who were thus obstinate in unbelief. This rebuke may be divided into two parts; the one,<sup>1</sup> suited to humble the pride, and the other,<sup>2</sup> to silence the blasphemy, of the unbelieving Jews.

Our Saviour had just said to those who believed: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." As

<sup>1</sup> Verses 33—47.<sup>2</sup> Verses 48—58.

soon as the unbelieving Jews heard these words,

*They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?'*

It is the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, that the year in which our Lord was now present at Jerusalem, was a sabbatical year. And, if so, great numbers of servants would be set at liberty at this feast of tabernacles, which was about the commencement of the civil year. Viewing the answer of the Jews, therefore, with a particular reference to this circumstance, Sir Isaac Newton would thus interpret it, as containing two distinct thoughts: 'We are *Abraham's seed*, and, consequently, had we ever been in bondage, we should have been set at liberty at this season, though Gentile slaves are still detained in slavery. But, more than this, we *never were in bondage to any man* at all.'

The above interpretation of the scope of our Lord's language is worthy of our attention; and it derives much confirmation from our Lord's constant practice of availing himself of every occasion, and every circumstance, for the purpose of conveying instruction to all around him. But the body of commentators adopt a more general interpretation of the words of the above verse;

and the following paraphrase by Bishop Hall conveys this more general signification : ‘ What tellest thou us of freedom? Tell this to the forlorn heathen, who are born to servitude. As for us, we are the seed of faithful Abraham, and that, not of the bondwoman, but of the free. We scorn the imputation of bondage, and abhor the very name of it. Why dost thou then tell us of being made free?’

Our Lord takes up, in inverse order, these words of the Jews, which, according to either interpretation, strongly evinced the blindness and perverseness of their hearts. And he first replies, therefore, to their declaration that they were *never in bondage to any man*.

*Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin, or, as the original phrase imports,\* Whoever habitually practises and goes on in a course of sin, is the servant of sin, and the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*<sup>5</sup>

That is; Notwithstanding your haughty, and even notoriously false, boasts of civil and religious freedom, I warn you, that, be ye whose descendants ye will, if ye indulge yourselves in the practice of wickedness, ye are slaves; under the

\* *πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν.*

<sup>5</sup> Verses 34—36.

power of your lusts, and the guilt of your sins. And, as such, all unbelieving Jews, though the natural seed of Abraham, shall be quickly excluded from God's church and favour; while I, the Son of God, and the eminently promised seed of Abraham, shall continue as the Head of the Church, and all true believers shall abide therein as members. 'You boast, indeed, of your privileges, and your liberty; but the truth is, that you are in God's family, only as Ishmael was in Abraham's. You are servants; even the servants of sin. And it is not for servants to make account of a perpetual claim to the house, that they may abide in it always. If, indeed, ye be once the adopted sons of God, ye may challenge a room in his house; but, as ye are, ye have none. Neither shall ye attain to this happy condition of spiritual freedom, unless the Son of God do invest you with it. Your own endeavours will but enthrall you more and more. It is his grace and mercy only, which can work your deliverance.'<sup>5</sup> If I, therefore, who am the Son of God, and the Head over all things to the Church, grant you this spiritual freedom, you shall be *free indeed*: free from the bondage of sin and Satan; free from the love of the world and the fear of men; free from enslaving attachments to traditional superstitions; free from the yoke of

<sup>5</sup> *Bishop Hall's Paraphrase.*

the ceremonial law ; free from legal terrors and the spirit of bondage ; free from the dread of death, and the condemnation due to your sins ; and fully possessed of everything satisfying and glorious.

Our Lord, having thus exposed the emptiness of the boast made by the unbelieving Jews, as to their *never* having been in *bondage to any man* : notices, in the next place, more particularly, their other declaration, that they were *Abraham's seed*.

*I know that ye are Abraham's seed ; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.*<sup>6</sup>

That is ; I know that ye are Abraham's seed, according to the flesh. But what will this avail you, while ye are strangers to the faith of Abraham ? And this is abundantly manifest, seeing that ye seek to kill me, in whom Abraham believed ; a wickedness, of which ye could never have been guilty, if ye had once yielded yourselves to that saving word of mine, which hath been delivered unto you. But your hearts are so filled with pride, and prejudice, and false notions, that my word, meeting with all those obstructions, cannot find a place to penetrate

<sup>6</sup> Verses 37, 38.

them. My doctrine is such as I have received from my heavenly Father; and it is therefore holy and divine. On the other hand, your practices are such as plainly show that you are not the genuine and believing children of Abraham, but the children of another father.

*They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father.*<sup>7</sup>

Here our Lord repeats, more at length, the charge which he had preferred against the unbelieving Jews at the thirty-eighth verse. But still, he so repeats it, as if he were unwilling to name Satan as their father. Nor was it until, in the pride of their impenitent hearts, they dared to claim God, as their father, that our Lord expressly declared to them who their real father was.

*Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.*<sup>8</sup>

The Jews now perceived the drift of our Lord's discourse; and they answered, therefore, with indignation, that they were *not born of fornication*, evidently alluding to that marriage

<sup>7</sup> Verses 39—41.

<sup>8</sup> Verse 41.

covenant, which, in scripture, is represented to have subsisted between God and the Jewish nation, and by which their obligation to reverence, love, and obey him, was powerfully illustrated. Their words implied that they were not chargeable, either with being idolaters themselves, or with having sprung from idolatrous ancestors; but that they had *one Father, even God*, whose covenanted people and children they were.

*Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; words which plainly denote something far beyond his merely coming into the world as Mediator; being wholly different from what are spoken of any other person; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*<sup>1</sup>

He thus again declares, as he had repeatedly declared before,<sup>2</sup> that he came not *of himself*, unsupported and unauthorised, to serve his own separate ends; but that he came, as *sent* and commissioned by the Father, to display his glory, and to make known his truth.

*Why, continues Jesus, do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*<sup>3</sup>

And they *could not hear his word*, because pride, and their worldly prejudices and passions had so filled their minds, and so closed their

<sup>1</sup> Verse 42.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. v. 43; and vii. 28, 29.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 43.

hearts, against His doctrine, that, according to the equally expressive language which he had employed at the thirty-seventh verse, it could find *no place in them.*

Our Lord, having thus disproved their relation both to Abraham, and to God, now proceeds plainly to tell the unbelieving Jews whose children they really were.

*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do : i. e.<sup>4</sup> ye will resolutely and obstinately persist to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.<sup>5</sup>*

On comparing the forty-fifth and thirty-seventh verses, we find that the two sins, for which Christ chiefly reproves the Jews, are the attempt to take his life, and their contempt of the truth. And, in both these ways, they proved themselves to be the children of the devil. For, in the forcible language of Matthew Henry ; ‘ The devil is an enemy of life, because God is the God of life, and life is the happiness of man ; and he is an enemy to truth, because God is the God of truth, and truth is the bond of human society.’

And observe the emphasis of our Lord’s lan-

<sup>4</sup> θέλετε ποιεῖν.

<sup>5</sup> Verses 44, 45.



guage: *The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.* From the beginning of the world, this great adversary of God and his creation, has been a murderer, or man-slayer. Having departed from his original love of truth, and from his fidelity and loyalty to his Maker and Lord, by his awful apostasy, he proceeded, as soon as possible, to murder the souls and the bodies of men. For, by tempting our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit, he, at once, opened the flood-gates of desolation upon the whole human race. Soon afterwards, he instigated wicked Cain to murder his righteous brother Abel; and rivers of innocent blood have been shed by persecutors ever since. The devil has always been the great tempter of mankind to every species of discord and contention; and he has prompted men to all those excesses, by reason of which multitudes destroy themselves, and each other. All these murders, moreover, are inseparably connected with lies and deceit. For the devil first prevailed over Eve by a lie; and all persecutions and contentions, of whatever description, may be traced to the same evil source. In a word, while God employs truth, as the medium of all good to men, the devil is the great promoter of false-

hood of every kind, throughout the earth, as the deadly fountain of all mischief. Emphatically, therefore, does our Saviour declare, that *when the devil speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.* He is altogether composed, as it were, of subtlety, dissimulation, and treachery; so that, when he propagates a lie of any kind, he acts in character, and brings it forth out of his inexhaustible treasury. For he is not only a *liar*, but the original author of all lies, and the father of all liars. Such is the awful representation of the character of the evil one; and it was plain that these unbelieving Jews were his children, since they refused to believe in Jesus, and sought to put him to death, not only though he told them the truth, but BECAUSE he did so.<sup>5</sup>

For that it was the truth, as truth, which they obstinately resisted, our Lord thus unanswerably demonstrates:

*Which of you convinceth me of sin? or, according to the obvious scope of the word in this connexion, Which of you convinceth me of error, or falsehood, or imposture? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*<sup>6</sup>

How simple and how affecting is the argument

<sup>5</sup> Scott in loc.

<sup>6</sup> Verses 46, 47.

which our Lord here employs! *He that is of God, heareth God's voice.* He, who walks with God, as his own child, in the spirit of adoption, has an habitual disposition to hear his words, and to believe and obey them. He so hears those words, as to perceive the voice of his heavenly Father in them. And he listens, therefore, and attends to, the doctrines and commandments of God, even as a child, who loves his parent, will regard and obey his commandments. Now, since the unbelieving Jews would *not hear God's word*, it was evident that they were *not of God*. And if they did not understand and believe the things which Jesus said to them, it was not because the things themselves were obscure, or unsupported by sufficient evidence; but because they were not God's children, and were, therefore, unacquainted with his voice.

Yes, brethren, if we are God's children, we shall immediately discern our Father's voice, and listen to his words. And we may be sure, therefore, that if his voice shall sound strange to our ears, and his words appear hard to be understood, it must be owing to the blindness and ignorance of our corrupted nature. For where there is an honest and a good heart, the word of God finds a sweet and an easy entrance. And, therefore, as we ourselves would receive this word, for the food and refreshment of our souls,

we must pray for such a teachable, and humble, and childlike frame of mind, that, when God shall say to us, in his word : “ Seek ye my face,” we may, each of us, reply, from the ground of the heart : “ Thy face, Lord, will I seek ;”<sup>7</sup> and may I show that I am truly thine, by hearing thy word with meekness, receiving it with pure affection, and bringing forth all the fruits of the Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

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## SECTION XXXIII.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 48—59.

### JESUS REBUKING THE BLASPHEMY OF THE UNBELIEVING JEWS.

We are now considering that part of our Lord's conference at Jerusalem, in which he is severely rebuking the unbelieving Jews. The portion, to which I last called your attention, was suited, but for their perverseness, to humble their pride. And the concluding part, which we are now to consider, was suited, but for the same reason, to silence their blasphemy.

Our Lord, after telling those, whom he ad-

<sup>7</sup> Psa. xlvii. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Litany.*

dressed, whose children they really were, had plainly said : “ He that is of God heareth God’s words : ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” And it was on hearing these words, that, with their pride unsubdued, and their passions inflamed, the unbelieving Jews uttered words of blasphemy against Jesus.

*Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ?<sup>1</sup>*

The former part of this scornful and impious address, in which his hearers applied to him, generally, an ordinary term of reproach and contempt, our Lord passes by in silence. And, even in answering the latter part, in which they expressly charged him with having *a devil*, and with being, therefore, as their words implied, a false accuser and calumniator, our Lord spoke with such mildness, as showed, not only that his mind was quite undisturbed by the insulting language which they had used, but also that he was still desirous of proclaiming to them the message of salvation. For his answer contains, first, a refutation of the charge which had been made against him ; and then a fresh description of the saving nature of his doctrine.

*Jesus answered, I have not a devil, but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek*

<sup>1</sup> Verse 48.

*not mine own glory : there is one that seeketh and  
edgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man  
keep my saying, he shall never see death.*<sup>2</sup>

That is; My continual and earnest study to  
advance the glory of my Father, in the salvation  
of his people, fully manifests that, in my work,  
I am not influenced or directed by an evil spirit.  
I seek not mine own glory ; nor am I solicitous  
about either your reproaches or your applause ;  
as I know that my Father will effectually vindicate  
my character, and avenge all the indignities  
offered to it. And I solemnly assure you, that  
whosoever heartily embraces and holds fast my  
spiritual and holy doctrine, in faith and obe-  
dience, shall be delivered from every real misery,  
and enjoy everlasting happiness. Yea ; so illus-  
triously will the Father promote *my glory*, in the  
conversion of sinners, that whosoever *keepeth my  
saying*, shall not only be entitled to eternal life,  
but shall immediately be advanced to so glorious  
and happy a state, that the dissolution of this  
mortal nature shall, with respect to him, hardly  
deserve to be called *death*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Verses 49—51.

<sup>3</sup> 'None of the faithful shall see death, because, being born  
again of incorruptible seed, they live even by dying. For,  
being joined unto Christ their Head, they cannot be de-  
stroyed by death, which is only unto them a passage into  
the kingdom of heaven.'—*Calvin*.

*Then said the Jews unto him, misunderstanding the above declaration, and supposing him to assert that his disciples should be exempted from the common lot of mortality ; Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets ; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead ? And the prophets are dead : whom makest thou thyself ?*<sup>4</sup>

As if they had said ; Art thou able, not only to escape death thyself, but to preserve all thy followers from it ? For who can promise that others shall never die, but he who is himself to live for ever ? *Whom, then, makest thou thyself ?*

In the answer which our Lord returns to the above scornful and contemptuous question, he takes no notice of the blasphemous calumny which they had just reiterated ; but simply replies to the two charges which they now preferred against him ; viz. the one, that he spake as if he were greater than Abraham ; and the other, that he exalted himself. And he begins with noticing the latter charge ; because if that part of the accusation were placed in its true light, his superiority to Abraham would be immediately and clearly established.

<sup>4</sup> Verses 52, 53.

*Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour nothing : it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say, that he is your God : yet ye have not known him ; but I know him : and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you : but I know him, and keep his saying.<sup>5</sup>*

Having thus shown, in answer to the impious scoffs of the unbelieving Jews, that he did not honour himself, but that it was the Father that honoured him ; our Lord now goes on to declare to them how Abraham felt and acknowledged that superiority which they treated with mockery and derision.

*Your father Abraham rejoiced, or, earnestly desired,<sup>6</sup> to see my day : and he saw it, and was glad.<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> Verses 54, 55.

<sup>6</sup> The word *ἡγαλλίσσατο* denotes the action of a person, who, when impelled by a strong desire for an object, leaps forwards towards its attainment with joy.

<sup>7</sup> Verse 56. ‘Abraham desired Christ, when he was absent. The Jews despised him, when present. We may also gather, from our Lord’s words, that as God did not suffer the desire of Abraham to be frustrated, so he will not, at this day, suffer any who really desire to come unto Christ, to go away unsatisfied.’—*Calvin*. ‘Jesus does not say, *Abraham rejoiced to see ME*, but, *he rejoiced to see MY DAY*. So that He makes *His day*, the object of all this exultation and joy : *His day*, I say, and not Himself ; commending Abraham, that he rejoiced at the sight, not of Himself, but



My brethren; When we attentively consider these words, we may conclude, with respect to them, as with respect to the last words of the preceding answer,\* that they were intended, for the conviction, not so much of the cavilling adversaries, who disputed rather than inquired, and who sought to confound him, rather than to be instructed themselves; as of those humble and sincere disciples, who pondered these things in their hearts, who were waiting for the consolation of Israel, and who gladly received the testimony that Jesus was the Messiah. Such persons would be confirmed in their faith, by finding, in the history of Abraham, an illustration of the great work of redemption. And the part of Abraham's history, which obviously affords this illustration, is that which relates to his intended sacrifice of his only son Isaac.

It is the opinion of the learned Bishop Warburton, that the command to Abraham, to take

of it. Verily, this speech of the Lord Jesus is much to the honour of *His day*: and the very solemnity of the feast of the Nativity, and all the joy and gladness thereon, may well be thought to have been founded upon these words. And, indeed, if it were a praise to Abraham, that he *desired so earnestly* (ἀγαλλισάμενο) *to see this day*, we may be sure that it will be no dispraise to us, to *rejoice that we have seen it.*—*Bishop Andrews.* Sermon on John viii. 56, preached on Christmas Day.

\* See verse 51.

is son, and offer him for a burnt offering, was designed to be an information, by action instead of words, of the great sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of mankind, given at the earnest request of Abraham, who, as we are here told, longed impatiently to *see Christ's day*. And this opinion is deserving of our attention, inasmuch as it makes the history of the command a direct prophecy of Christ, as Redeemer of the world. Throughout the whole of this remarkable transaction, the obedience and the faith of Abraham were signally displayed. And this obedience and faith, God was pleased highly to reward, making the act, by which they were evinced, the very means both of manifesting the coming of the Messiah, and of satisfying Abraham's earnest desire to know the manner in which the world through Him should be blessed. Yes, brethren, Abraham would thus learn that the sacrifice, which had been demanded of him, as a trial of his faith, was actually to be made by the Almighty Father of the world; that, as Isaac was the child of promise, so the illustrious person descended from himself, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, would be still more eminently the subject of all the promises and prophecies of God; that, as Isaac went to mount Moriah, to be laid upon the altar, so would the Son of God be afterwards offered on that same

mountain ; and that, as Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice, so would Christ be the bearer of the cross. ‘ So very exact, too,’ says Bishop Warburton, ‘ was the parabolical representation, that the duration of the action, viz. three days, was the same as the interval between Christ’s death and resurrection, both which events were designed to be represented in it. And further, not only the final sacrifice of the Son of God was figured in the commanded one of Isaac, but the intermediate typical sacrifice, in the Mosaic economy, was represented by the permitted sacrifice of the ram offered up instead of Isaac.’

Such, then, was the manner in which Abraham *rejoiced to see* Christ’s *day*. And if it be written, of all the patriarchs and prophets, under the Old Testament dispensation, that they “ all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,”<sup>9</sup> will not their ardent longings after the promised seed, rise up in judgment against us, if we shall be found to neglect so great salvation? For, be it remembered, beloved, “ the day-spring from on high,” which they so earnestly desired to *see*, “ has visited us,” to chase away the shadows of night, and to “ guide our feet into the way of peace.”<sup>1</sup> Yes, we are all invited to draw near by faith,

<sup>9</sup> Heb. xi. 13.

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 78, 79.

that we may receive this unspeakable gift; that we may wash in the precious blood of Christ; that we may feed on him in our hearts; that we may be filled with his Spirit; and that we may be loaded with his benefits!

The language which Jesus had employed, was well suited to show the unbelieving Jews, how Abraham, whom they claimed as *their father*, had acknowledged the greatness of Him, who was then addressing them. But, blinded by prejudice and perverseness, they utterly misunderstood the scope of our Lord's words.

*Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*<sup>2</sup>

That is, as we may, with Bishop Pearson, interpret our Lord's words: 'Do you question how I could see Abraham, who am not yet fifty years old? Verily, verily, I say unto you, before ever Abraham was born, I had a real being and existence, by which I was capable of the sight of him, and in which I have continued until now.' Or, according to the paraphrase of Bishop Hall: 'I tell you, O ye fond Jews, my being is not to be measured by my coming in the flesh. I am that God, which was and is from everlasting. Abraham had his being in time; mine is

<sup>2</sup> Verses 57, 58.

from eternity. Your fathers knew me by the Name, I AM. And I am still so to you; even THE SAME YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER.

*Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.<sup>3</sup>*

My brethren; Jesus refuses not to die: but he reserves himself for a death more painful and more ignominious. He awaits the hour, before determined in the decrees of the everlasting covenant, when he may lay down his life, a willing sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He goes, therefore, *out of the temple*; because that temple was only for the figurative sacrifices of the Old Testament dispensation, and not for the victim of the world; for whom a new altar must be prepared, and who must be offered up, as it were, in the sight of the whole earth. And when his hour was fully come, he poured out his soul unto death, to show that he was indeed the promised Seed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; even the same unchangeable I AM, who had once appeared to Moses in the bush, to declare his good will to his afflicted people; and who, afterwards, by finishing, on the cross, the work of redemption, showed how deeply he was "grieved for the affliction of

<sup>3</sup> Verse 59.

oseph,"<sup>4</sup> and how truly he "remembered his covenant."<sup>5</sup>

Dwell, then, I beseech you, on the full import of the high and mysterious Name, I AM; and pray that your hearts may be opened to embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope which this name implies! It is evident that when the Son of God appeared to Moses in the bush, as the Angel of the covenant, he called himself, I AM, or, I AM THAT I AM, to declare, as JEHOVAH, his self-existence, his unchangeableness, and his truth. And when, therefore, in the days of his flesh, we find him again employing the very same language, do we not learn that he remaineth, throughout all generations, the same blessed fountain of grace and strength to his believing people? Yes, beloved, to borrow the admirable language of Bishop Beveridge; 'He says, to all true believers, not, I am your Friend, your Father, your Protector: not, I am your Light, your Life, your Guide, your Strength, or your Tower; but only, I AM. He sets, as it were, his hand to a blank, that his people may write under it whatever they please, that is good for them. As if he should say: Are they weak? I am Strength. Are they poor? I am Riches? Are they in trouble? I am Comfort. Are they sick? I am Health. Are they dying? I am Life.

<sup>4</sup> Amos vi. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ex. vi. 5.

Have they nothing? I am all things. I am Wisdom and Power; I am Justice and Mercy; I am Grace and Goodness; I am Glory, Beauty, Holiness, Perfection, All-sufficiency, Eternity, **JEHOVAH, I AM.** Whatsoever is suitable to their nature, or convenient for them in their several conditions, that I AM. Whatsoever is lovely in itself, or desirable unto them, that I AM. Whatsoever is pure and holy; whatsoever is good or needful to make men happy, that I AM. So that, by this incommunicable and most significant name, God represents himself to his people as an universal good. And he leaves them to make the application of His goodness to themselves, according to their several wants, capacities, and desires, by saying, in general; I AM.

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## SECTION XXXIV.

CHAP. IX. ver. 1—7.

### THE BLIND MAN CURED.

The evangelist now enters upon the history of that miracle, which gave occasion to our Lord's fifth conference with the Jews at Jerusalem.

**A**lthough they had manifested such bitterness against him, and had treated him with such scorn and contempt, yet we still behold him filled with compassion towards them, and earnestly desiring their salvation. And, accordingly, after the conference in the temple, he employed another method, every way suited to convince his unbelieving adversaries, by performing a miracle on a person blind from his birth, and by following it up with another conference, which may be regarded as our Lord's fifth appeal to the Jews, while present at Jerusalem, on account of the feast of tabernacles.

It is in the first seven verses of the chapter, that our evangelist describes the circumstances attending the miracle itself. He then relates, to the end of the thirty-fourth verse, the course which was immediately pursued by the neighbours, and the vexatious inquiries which were afterwards instituted by the pharisees. And, from the thirty-fifth verse of this chapter, to the twenty-first verse of the tenth chapter, we have the history of the conference which afterwards ensued between our Lord and the pharisees.

*And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents :*



i. e. the words being evidently elliptical, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, that he was born blind : *but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*<sup>1</sup>

The evangelist here relates, of the man, whom Jesus saw, as he passed by, that he was blind from his birth ; thus setting forth the greatness of the cure, from the character of the malady. Opening the eyes of the blind, is repeatedly mentioned in those prophetic scriptures, which relate to the coming of the Messiah. And it is a miracle, peculiar to our Lord himself. It is neither included in the commission given to the apostles and seventy disciples ; nor, with the single exception of the removal of Saul's temporary blindness by Ananias, was it ever performed by any of God's servants, either before or after the coming of Christ.

We are told that our Lord's disciples asked him, saying, *Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ?* ' In one short question,' says Bishop Hall, ' I find two truths, and two falsehoods ; the truths implied, the falsehoods expressed. It is true, as a general proposition, that man's suffering is for sin ; and it is true that we may justly, and do often, suffer even for the sins of our parents. It is false, that, in every instance, the immediate cause of suffering,

<sup>1</sup> Verses 1—3.

a man's actual transgression; and it is false that a man could sin actually before he was, or could beforehand suffer for his after-sins. In all likelihood, that absurd conceit of the transmigration of souls possessed the very disciples. How easily, and how far, may the best be mis-carried with a common error! Assuredly we are not thankful for our own illumination, if we do not look with charity and pity upon the gross mis-opinions of our brethren.'

*Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* 'Surely we learn nothing of thee, O Saviour, if not meekness. What a sweet temper should be in our carriage, towards the weaknesses of others' judgment. How should we instruct them without bitterness; and, without violence of passion, expect the meet seasons of their better information. The tender mother, or nurse, doth not rate her little one, for that he goes not well; but gives him her hand, that he may go better. It is the spirit of lenity, that must restore and confirm the lapsed.'<sup>2</sup>

'Our Lord's answer, moreover, is direct and punctual. It was not as a special penal infliction, either upon the man or his parents, that he had been born blind. No; there was a higher cause of this privation; viz. the glory that

<sup>2</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

God meant to win unto himself, by redressing it. All God's afflictive acts are not to be regarded as punishments. Some are for the benefit of the creature, whether for probation, or prevention, or reformation. And all are for the praise whether of the power, or the justice, or the mercy, of God.' <sup>3</sup>

Yes, brethren, it is most emphatically true, of all the divine dispensations, whether of mercy or severity, that they are sent to us, in order that *the works of God may be made manifest in us*. If we consider these words with more immediate reference to the case before us, by *the works of God*, we may understand all that happened to this man; viz. first, his blindness, as an act of God's providence, and then, his being healed by our Lord, as an act of Divine mercy and power. It had all been graciously ordered by God, to show how he can make all things conduce to the glory and praise of his name. And if we consider these words more generally, it is true of all, even the most afflictive dispensations, that they are intended to illustrate the perfections and the attributes of God. For, in the admirable language of the judicious *Sanderson*; 'It is from God's mercy, ordering them to those ends which he hath purposed, that his punishments are good; but it is withal from our

<sup>3</sup>. *Bishop Hall*.

sins, deserving them as the cause, that they are just. Even as the rain that falleth upon the earth, whether it moisten it kindly, and make it fruitful, or whether it choak or drown it, yet still had its beginning from the vapours, which the earth itself sent up. All those evils, which fall so daily and so thick upon us from heaven, whether to warn us, or to plague us, are but arrows, which ourselves first shot up to heaven, and which now drop down again, with doubled force, upon our heads. Our Saviour, therefore, never intended otherwise, in his answer to his disciples, but that still the true cause deserving the man's blindness, was his and his parents' sin : but his purpose was, at the same time, to instruct his disciples, that that infirmity was not laid upon him, rather than upon another man, because he, or his parents, had deserved it more than other men ; but for some farther ends which God had designed, in his secret and everlasting purpose, and for this among the rest, viz. that the works of God might *be made manifest in him*, and the Godhead of the Son, made glorious in his miraculous cure.'

What, then, is the instruction which we may derive, brethren, from our Lord's answer to his disciples? We are here emphatically warned of our proneness to judge others, rather than ourselves. The duty of self-examination is urged

upon every one of us by the solemn declaration, that "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."<sup>4</sup> And therefore, when we are visited ourselves with God's chastening hand, we should deem ourselves called upon to explore all "the chambers of imagery,"<sup>5</sup> for the various abominations which may be lurking within them, and to say, each of us, from the very bottom of our hearts: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."<sup>6</sup> But when we witness the afflictions and the calamities of others, we must beware of forming any rash and uncharitable conclusions respecting them, lest we should be found to charge God's judgments upon false causes. 'Such persons should know how remote their judgment is from the truth; since God *may* strike, and yet not be angry; and, further, he may be angry, and yet not hate. The hand of a father may do the one, and his heart may entertain the other; but to hate a son consists not with that relation. God *may* smite his creature, and yet tenderly love him at the same time. The air may be clear and wholesome, and yet very sharp. God may register the same name in the book of his eternal election, which he suffers to

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 31.<sup>5</sup> Ezek. viii. 12.<sup>6</sup> Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24.

be proscribed here in the course of his providence: and eternal salvation, in another world, is very fairly consistent with certain destruction in this. While nothing but storms and tempests encounter a man in the lower regions, there may be a perfect calm and serenity in the mansions above.<sup>7</sup>

Above all things, therefore, let us be on our guard, my brethren, against a spirit of rash judgment, and against that vain and presumptuous curiosity which ‘makes men presume to look into the ark, and which will assuredly provoke God to strike. Curiosity, in the true nature of it, is, and may be properly accounted, the incontinence of the mind; and it is but one remove from the rebellion of it, since it breaks through all the bounds which God has set around the secrets of his counsel. So that, next to the disputing of God’s revealed will, the greatest invasion, doubtless, that can be made upon his royal prerogative, is to intrude into his secret.’<sup>8</sup>

Our Lord, having declared that *the works of God* were to be *made manifest* in the man born blind, now goes on to say:

*I must WORK THE WORKS of him that sent me,* thus plainly appropriating to himself the power of the divine Majesty, *while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *South.* Sermon xxvi.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Verse 4.

It was now the sabbath-day;<sup>1</sup> and Jesus, therefore, in the above words, seems to tell his disciples that they need not be surprised when they saw him perform a miracle on that day. For, though they might imagine that he could easily defer it till the day of holy rest was over; yet the period of his earthly ministry was drawing so rapidly to a close, that he eagerly embraced every opportunity for performing deeds of mercy. It is not improbable, also, that our Lord might choose to work this miracle on the sabbath, because he knew that the time when it was performed, would occasion it to be more strictly inquired into by the pharisees, and would tend, therefore, to make it more generally known.

There would seem, in the original, to be a peculiar emphasis in the use of the personal pronoun; as if our Lord meant to imply that, as the Son of God and the true God, he might *work* differently from other men, and that he was not bound, therefore, as others were, to observe all the rules laid down, in the law, respecting the sabbath: I MUST, or it BECOMES ME, to *work the works of him that sent me, while it is day*. And it has been well observed, also,<sup>2</sup> with regard to the second clause, that it is not, *The night cometh when I cannot work*, but when, generally speaking, NO MAN can work. For it is certain, brethren,

<sup>1</sup> See verse 14.

<sup>2</sup> Bengel in loc.

hat He, who spake these words worketh always, is the Lord of heaven and earth, by day and by night. But then it is also certain, that he always worketh according to the appointed seasons. And the visible manifestation of himself, as the Messiah, by his works of mercy on the bodies of men, was soon to terminate.

*As long, therefore, as I am in the world, he adds, I am the light of the world.*<sup>3</sup>

Our Lord here says: *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* And yet, we know that when he left the world and returned to the Father, he shone forth, still more illustriously, as a “light” to “lighten the Gentiles,” and as “the glory of his people Israel.”<sup>4</sup> It follows, therefore, that the language of this verse must be understood, together with that of the preceding verse, as applying to the *light*, which shone from our Lord, during the days of his earthly ministry, when he manifested his mediatorial glory so plainly, in his doctrine, life, and wonderful works, that all but the judicially blinded could not fail to recognise, in him, *the light of the world.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Verse 5.

<sup>4</sup> Luke ii. 32.

<sup>5</sup> In confirmation of the above remark, I may observe that our Lord here applies to himself the title, which is given to the Messiah in Isaiah xlix. 6, and lx. 1; and by which the Messiah is frequently designated in the Jewish writings.



I may add, that there is an additional beauty in the image employed in these two verses, if we suppose that the day was now declining, and night coming on; and that our Lord, therefore, took occasion, from this circumstance, to introduce a metaphor, so well suited to illustrate the truth, that no opportunity for doing good should be omitted; *day* representing the opportunity, and *night* the loss of that opportunity.

*When he had thus spoken*, in order that he might exercise the faith and obedience of the blind man, and might show that he could command efficacy on whatever means he should be pleased to use, *he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay; and then, for a further trial of the man's faith and submission, he said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is, by interpretation, sent.) He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*<sup>6</sup>

Our Lord's command to the blind man to *go and wash in the pool of Siloam*, may be regarded as symbolical, teaching him that he owed his cure to the Messiah, one of whose names was Shiloh, the *sent* of God. We know, moreover, that "the waters of Shiloah"<sup>7</sup> were made, by the prophet, a type of the Messiah, and that the two basins, which received these waters, were com-

<sup>6</sup> Verses 6, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. viii. 6.

only called the "wells of salvation."<sup>8</sup> But, beside the emblematical reason, thus mentioned by the evangelist, our Lord might have ordered the blind man to go and *wash in the pool of Siloam*, because there were, generally, great numbers of people there assembled, who would be witnesses of the miracle. Accordingly, when the man WASHED AND CAME SEEING, the miracle was so universally known, that, as we find from the sequel of the chapter, it immediately became the general topic of conversation at Jerusalem.

Yes, brethren, it was sufficiently manifest, to all that dwelt at Jerusalem, that a "notable miracle had been done."<sup>9</sup> And, as we trace, in the history of this *work of God*, the evidence of Christ's mediatorial glory, should we not pray, for ourselves, that we, who are deprived of light and understanding, even from our mother's womb, may have grace to receive into our hearts this heavenly physician, who does not wait until we call upon him for help, but graciously remembers us in our low and dark estate, and prevents us with his mercy, while we are drowned in an utter forgetfulness of light and life. He sees us lying in our blood, and says to us: *Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*; go, wash in the fountain which I have opened for sin and for uncleanness. And, if we listen to his call, we shall *wash and come*

<sup>8</sup> See Isa. xii. 3.

<sup>9</sup> See Acts iv. 16.

*seeing* ; having our eyes opened to perceive, and our hearts sanctified to embrace, and ever hold fast, the things which belong to our everlasting peace !

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## SECTION XXXV.

CHAP. IX. ver. 8—25.

### INQUIRY BY THE COUNCIL.

After relating the history of the *miraculous* cure of the man born blind, our evangelist goes on to mention the course which was immediately pursued by the neighbours, and the vexatious inquiries which were afterwards instituted by the Pharisees. And, by subjoining this narrative of the investigation which followed, the evangelist has established the truth of the miracle on the surest possible foundation ; for, as Matthew Henry observes, ‘ that which, at first, was not believed without scrutiny, may, afterward, be admitted without scruple.’

We have been told that, in obedience to our Lord’s command, the man who had been born

and, went to the pool of Siloam, and “washed, and came seeing.”

*The neighbours, therefore, and they which before had seen him, that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he; others said, It is like him; but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.<sup>1</sup>*

There is something particularly beautiful in the manner in which the good Bishop Hall comments on the doubts here entertained by the neighbours, as to the identity of the man's person. ‘The want or the sudden presence of an eye, much more of both, must needs make a great change in the face. Those little balls of light, which, no doubt, were more clear than the eyes of other men, could not but give a new light to the countenance. I marvel not, if the neighbours, which had wont to see this dark visage led by a guide, and guided by a staff, seeing him now walking confidently alone out of his own inward light, and looking them cheerfully in the face, doubted whether this were he.

<sup>1</sup> Verses 8—12.

And even thus, in the redress of the spiritual blindness, the whole habit of the man is changed. Where, before, his face looked dull and earthly; now, there is a sprightly cheerfulness in it, through the comfortable knowledge of God and heavenly things. Whereas, before, his heart was set upon earthly things; now, he uses them, but enjoys them not, and that use is, because he must, not because he would. Where, before, his fears and griefs were only for pains of body, or loss of estate or reputation; now, they are only spent upon the displeasure of his God, and the peril of his soul. So as now the neighbours can say, *Is this he?*" Yes, beloved, they, whose eyes are opened, and whose hearts are cleansed, by divine grace, are, indeed, the same men, yet are they "new creatures."<sup>2</sup> And, being known both by the identity of their persons, and by the newness of their characters, they become living monuments of the Redeemer's glory, and continually proclaim to others the beauty of holiness and the power of his salvation.

It is worthy of remark that he, who, in the above passage, speaks of our Lord as *a man, who is called Jesus*, presently declares him to be *a prophet*;<sup>3</sup> and afterwards worships him as *the Son of God*.<sup>4</sup> It is plain, therefore, that the Lord gradually wrought on his heart, until he

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>3</sup> Verse 17.<sup>4</sup> Verses 35—38.

“ filled him with all joy and peace in believing.”<sup>5</sup> And here, again, I must avail myself of the admirable language of Bishop Hall. ‘ The blind man knew no more than he said, and he said what he apprehended : *A man*. He heard Jesus speak ; he felt his hand ; and, as yet, he could look no further. But, upon his next meeting, he saw God in this MAN. In matters of knowledge, we must be content to creep, ere we can go. As that other recovered blind man saw, first, men walk like trees, after, like men ;<sup>6</sup> so no marvel if this man saw, first, this God only as a man, after, this man as God also. In vain, therefore, shall we either expect a sudden perfection in the understanding of divine matters, or censure those that want it.

The history thus proceeds :

*They brought to the Pharisees, i. e. according to the mode of expression commonly used by this evangelist, they brought to the council, which chiefly consisted of this sect, him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then, again, the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-*

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xv. 13.

<sup>6</sup> See Mark viii. 24, 25.

*day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*<sup>6</sup>

In bringing the man before the council, the neighbours were probably actuated, partly, by ill-will to Christ, desiring, as we may gather from the fourteenth verse, to charge him with having violated the Sabbath, and, partly, by curiosity, as wishing to see whether the council would own the person, who had done this signal miracle, to be that very Messiah, of whom Isaiah had so distinctly and so repeatedly declared, that he should open the eyes of the blind. But, whatever might have been the motive, which influenced the neighbours in this matter, it was thus wisely ordered, by the providence of God, that the members of the council should hear, from the mouth of *him that aforetime was blind*, a testimony, which would either lead them to acknowledge the reality of the miracle, or leave them without excuse for their unbelief.

Upon hearing, from the lips of the man, the account of his miraculous cure, some of the council said : *This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day* ; thus again betraying their ignorance of the real nature of the sabbath, by supposing that works of mercy or necessity were forbidden on that day ; and thus

<sup>6</sup> Verses 13—16.

affording, at the same time, by the idle reiteration of a formerly<sup>7</sup> refuted charge, the strongest possible argument in favour of our Lord's blameless life and conversation. We are told, however, that others of the council said ; *How can a man that is a sinner do SUCH miracles?* And there would seem to be a peculiar emphasis in the language here employed, intimating that, in the judgment of those who put the question, there were, at least, some miracles so glorious and so benevolent, that no evil agent would have either inclination or power to perform them ; and that *such* a miracle had now been wrought on the blind man.

*They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?* or, as it might be more clearly expressed, *What sayest thou of him for giving thee sight?* *He said, He is a prophet.*<sup>8</sup>

May we not say, brethren, that, as the mercy

<sup>7</sup> See chaps. v. and vii.

<sup>8</sup> Verse 17. 'The boldness of this man is, as it were, another miracle. And if he confessed, so freely and so courageously, that Christ was a prophet, though he did not as yet understand that he was the Son of God, how shameful is their conduct, who, being discouraged with fear, do either deny him or keep silence, though they know that he sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, and that he shall come from thence, at the end of the world, to judge the quick and dead?'—*Calvin*.



of God had given this man sight, so the wisdom of God had taught him to confound and to silence those before whom he had been brought. For it was an acknowledged maxim among the Jews, that a prophet might dispense with the observation of the sabbath. And therefore, if the council allowed that Jesus was *a prophet*, then it plainly followed that, even according to their own false notions of the day, he might break the law of the sabbath, and still be guiltless. Or, if they did not allow him to be *a prophet*, then they must account for the miracle some other way than by the power of God; and yet from Satan or his agents *such* a miracle could not possibly proceed. Thus the wisdom of God taught the poor man to return the council such an answer, as placed them in a dilemma, out of which they were utterly unable to extricate themselves.

*But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: evidently admitting, as the introduction of the pronoun<sup>9</sup> in this clause implies, that*

<sup>9</sup> ἡμεῖς οὐκ οἶδαμεν.

they were not ignorant of what had been reported on the subject, though they themselves were not personally acquainted with the circumstances of the case: *he is of age, ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.*<sup>9</sup>

My brethren; What a mournful illustration is now before us of the truth of the wise man's observation, that "the fear of man bringeth a snare."<sup>1</sup> For, notwithstanding all the evidence by which this miracle was accompanied, and the appeal which it was suited to make to the inmost affections of their souls, these wretched parents were so afraid of incurring the sentence of a human tribunal, that they could dare to offend God, by failing to own so great a mercy, and to confess the adorable person by whom it had been wrought. Unmindful, therefore, of the claims of parental affection, they leave their child to bear alone all the malice and hatred of the pharisees. And thus we behold this poor man abandoned, not only by his neighbours, but even by his parents also, to endure persecution and reproach for the sake of Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> Verses 18—23.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxix. 25.

The evangelist, you observe, repeats, at the twenty-third verse, the observation of the parents; *He is of age: ask him.* Nor is this an idle or unmeaning repetition, for the words strongly tend to establish the reality of the miracle. The parents, it seems, do not deny that Jesus had performed the miracle; but they simply refer to their son, as being *of age*, and as being, therefore, a competent witness. They virtually point out, moreover, the folly and inconclusiveness of the course pursued by the council; seeing that they were taking the evidence of those who could only give hearsay evidence, while an eye-witness was at hand. In short, we may plainly infer, from the language of the parents, not that they themselves had any doubt as to the reality of the miracle, but that they were merely withheld, by fear, from saying anything further on the subject. And the whole scope of their answer only shows how every fresh inquiry instituted by the council tended to strengthen the evidence of the miracle, and to confound the obstinacy of their unbelief.

*Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Verses 24, 25.

The expression, *Give God the praise*, would seem,<sup>2</sup> to be a form of administering an oath. So that the council thus solemnly adjured the man, as in the presence of God, to acknowledge the truth, saying to him, in effect: Confess that there is imposture in this case; and, by thus confessing your sin, give praise and honour to God, who condemns all imposture and falsehood. And, to induce him the more readily to do this, the pharisees added that they *knew*, or were satisfied, that Jesus was a *sinner*! In answering the pharisees, the poor man first takes up these concluding words, and says, *Whether he be a sinner or not, I know not*, whatever may be your persuasion on the subject. He then emphatically adds: *One thing I know*, and thus does he obey the council's solemn adjuration to declare the truth, *that, whereas I was blind, now I see*.

Such, brethren, was the declaration of the man to whom Jesus had given sight. And, since our Lord has himself directed<sup>3</sup> our attention to the spiritual things signified by the miracle before us, may I not remind you, in conclusion, that even such is the declaration made by every converted sinner? He may not be able to meet the cavils and taunts of others. He may not even be able to tell how he was converted. It is enough if he can say: I was a sinner, but I now

<sup>2</sup> See Josh. vii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> See verse 5.

love God ; I was in darkness, but I have now been brought, by Jesus Christ, to the light of the truth. Yes, beloved, when a believer knows not how to answer the objections and arguments of enemies to the truth, he may still have recourse to his own experience : *One thing he knows, that whereas he was blind, now he sees.* And what he has discovered of the glory of God, the evil of sin, the depravity of his own heart, the preciousness of Christ, and the beauty of holiness, so convinces him of the truth of the Gospel, that no arguments can prevail against this “ witness in himself.”<sup>4</sup> He lifts up his heart, therefore, in gratitude to Him, who has opened his eyes to see the wonderful things of his law ; and he prays, with increasing earnestness, to Him, who has thus enlightened the eyes of his understanding with the bright beams of the Gospel, beseeching Him to give him grace so to ‘ walk in the light of his truth, that he may at length attain to the light of everlasting life.’<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 1 John v. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Collect for St. John the Evangelist’s Day.*

## SECTION XXXVI.

## CHAP. IX. ver. 26—41.

SENTENCE OF EXCOMMUNICATION PASSED BY THE  
COUNCIL.

The council, having failed in the attempt which they had made to induce the man who had been blind, to deny the fact of his miraculous cure, now proceeded to reiterate their inquiries respecting the circumstances of the miracle.

*Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? <sup>1</sup>*

In thus repeating the very same question, with which they had opened the examination, the pharisees evidently hoped either to throw the man off his guard and draw him into contradictory statements, or to elicit some new circumstances, which might afford them a pretext for charging our Lord with imposture. But the man, perceiving that the pharisees wanted only to ensnare him, was filled with honest indignation at their excessive malice and perverseness. And therefore, in the answer which he returned,

<sup>1</sup> Verse 26.

he plainly expressed his persuasion that they could have no good motive for such repeated questions on the same point, unless they were at length disposed to become the disciples of Jesus :

*He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again ? will ye also be his disciples ?*<sup>2</sup>

As Chrysostom remarks, There would seem to be an emphasis in the word *also*, implying that the man was himself prepared to become Christ's disciple, though as yet but imperfectly acquainted with all the excellency of his Benefactor.

*Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple ; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses : as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of any one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*<sup>3</sup>

May we not say, brethren, that the very opposition which the pharisees thus made between

<sup>2</sup> Verse 27.

<sup>3</sup> Verses 28—33.

Moses and Christ, plainly showed that they were not the disciples of Moses. For the true disciples of Moses would, at once, have become the disciples of Jesus. "Had ye believed Moses," thus had our Lord argued on a former occasion; "ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"<sup>4</sup> The pharisees ignorantly insinuated that the doctrine of Jesus contradicted that of Moses, whereas, in fact, it established and completed it. And, although they considered the miracles wrought by Moses, nearly fifteen hundred years before, as undeniable evidence of his divine mission; yet, at the same time, with strange inconsistency, they regarded the miracles of Jesus, which were far more numerous and beneficent, as altogether unworthy of their notice, though they fell under the cognizance of their own senses. 'Who indeed,' as the pious Doddridge asks, 'can forbear wondering at the obstinacy of those pharisees, and, on the same principle, at that of the present Jews, who, while they acknowledge that *God spake unto Moses*, because he wrought miracles, will not, on the evidence of yet more various and glorious miracles, and those attested beyond all contradiction, acknowledge the authority of the Son of God himself?'

<sup>4</sup> Chap. v. 46, 47.



But mark, on the other hand, how the poor man, who stood before the council, with the advantage of truth on his side, and with an entire exemption from those prejudices, which closed the eyes and the hearts of the pharisees, was able to baffle the sophistry of his most learned antagonists. The argument which he employs, has been well compared to that of David,<sup>5</sup> at the conclusion of the sixty-sixth psalm. ‘The proposition, in David’s argument, is ; “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me :” here it is, to the same purport ; *God heareth not sinners*. The assumption there is ; “But verily God hath heard me ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer :” here it is ; Verily God hath *heard* Jesus, for he hath been honoured with the doing of that which was never done before. The conclusion there is, to the honour of God ; “Blessed be God :” here, to the honour of the Lord Jesus ; He is of *God*.’

This argument, which it was impossible to answer, and which convicted them of malice and folly, excited the most indignant resentment from the pharisees. And, being ignorant of the scriptural doctrine, that all men are *born in sin*, they considered the former bodily blindness of the man, as a demonstration, that he came into the

<sup>5</sup> *Matthew Henry* in loc.

world under the divine displeasure, and far more depraved than other men :

*They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us? Thou, a poor, ignorant wretch, who knowest not the law, dost thou teach us, who sit in Moses' chair? Thou, who wast altogether born in sin, dost thou teach us, the holiness of whose sect is everywhere acknowledged, and who, as our very name implies, studiously abstain from all intercourse with such polluted creatures? Dost thou, indeed, presume to teach us? And they cast him out.*<sup>6</sup>

In the person, therefore, of this poor man, thus excommunicated by the council at Jerusalem, we behold, as it were, the first confessor of the Christian Church. And the good Bishop Hall closes his meditations on this part of the Gospel history, in the following beautiful and characteristic manner: 'I do not see the man beg any more, when he once had his eyes: no burgher in Jerusalem was richer than he. I hear him stoutly defending that gracious author of his cure, against the cavils of the malicious pharisees: I see him, as a resolute confessor, cheerfully suffering excommunication for the name of Christ, and firmly maintaining the innocence and honour of so blessed a benefactor: I hear

<sup>6</sup> Verse 34.

him reading a divinity lecture to them, that sat in Moses' chair; and convincing them of blindness, who punished him for seeing. How can I but envy thee, O happy man, who, of a patient, provest an advocate for thy Saviour; whose gain of bodily sight made way for thy spiritual eyes; who hast lost a synagogue, and hast found heaven; who, being abandoned of sinners, art received of the Lord of glory.'

For mark, brethren, how the narrative proceeds:

*Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered, and said, who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him. And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*<sup>7</sup>

Observe, first, how it is here said, of our blessed Lord, that he did not leave the poor man to bear his burden alone; but that he *found* him, after he had been excommunicated by the council. Some suppose that a few days, or even weeks, had been suffered to intervene, in order that his constancy and fidelity might be exhibited during this season of trial. But, be this as it may, we may assuredly gather, from the passage before

<sup>7</sup> Verses 35—38.

us, that all those will be *found* of Jesus Christ, who, for his name's sake, are rejected by the world.

Observe, secondly, how the poor man evinces his readiness to attend to the things which were spoken to him by Jesus. For when our Lord says, *Dost thou believe on the Son of God?* he immediately rejoins, *Who is he, Lord, that I might believe?*

Observe, lastly, the plain manifestation of our Lord's divine power. For, by what may be termed a second miracle, he now opens the eyes of the poor man's understanding with the same facility with which he had already opened the eyes of his body; and, by instantaneously dispelling every shadow of doubt, which might have been occasioned by his lowly and despised appearance, in the likeness of sinful flesh, he, at once, brought this poor man under the sweet and blessed yoke of faith: *Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

Here, as in the case of the disciples,<sup>s</sup> the act of adoration was joined with confession. And, in the present instance, this adoration was a yet more remarkable sign of strong faith, seeing that the man offered this unaccustomed honour

<sup>s</sup> See Matt. xiv. 33.

to our Lord in the presence of the pharisees. For thus the chapter closes :

*And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world ; that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin ; but now ye say, we see ; therefore your sin remaineth.*<sup>9</sup>

Our Saviour, according to his usual custom, is here adapting his language to the case immediately before him. And we may understand him, therefore, as saying to those assembled round him : You may see in this man, and in what has happened in relation to him, an illustration of the effects which my appearance is to produce. *For judgment I am come into this world* : i. e. Although, in secular matters, I do not judge or inflict punishment, yet I am come, by distinguishing grace, to separate the precious from the vile, and to execute spiritual judgment on specious hypocrites. Yes ; I am come *that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind* : i. e. as Bishop Hall paraphrases the words ; ‘ I am come in much mercy, to illuminate those, that are spiritually blind ; and I am come in no less justice, to give

<sup>9</sup> Verses 39—41.

those up to blind ignorance and spiritual darkness, who are fondly and proudly misconceited of their knowledge and wisdom.'

The pharisees, evidently understanding Christ, as speaking of blindness in this spiritual sense, said, *Are we blind also?* We freely admit that the people are blind and ignorant; but *are we*, who are so renowned for wisdom, and for whose judgment every one has such veneration, *are we blind also?* *Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin:* If ye had been really ignorant, your sin had not been so deeply aggravated: if ye were blind, as the Gentiles are, and as many of your own people are, from whom ye have taken the key of knowledge, ye should, comparatively speaking, have had *no sin*. Moreover, if ye had been sensible of your own blindness; if, when ye could see nothing else, ye could have seen your need of one to lead you, ye would soon have accepted Christ as your guide, and then ye would have had *no sin*; for ye would have submitted to an evangelical righteousness, and would have been put into a justified state. *But now ye say, we see:* Now that ye have knowledge, and are instructed out of the law, your sin is highly aggravated. And now that ye have a conceit of that knowledge, and think you see your way better than any body can show it you, *your sin remaineth:* your case is

desperate, and your disease incurable. And certain it is, my brethren, that, in every age of the church, the sin of those who are self-conceited and self-confident does, indeed, *remain*. For ‘they reject the gospel of grace, and therefore the guilt of their sin remains unpardoned. And they forfeit the Spirit of grace, and therefore the power of their sin remains unbroken.’<sup>1</sup>

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## SECTION XXXVII.

### CHAP. X. ver. 1—10.

#### JESUS CHRIST, THE DOOR.

Our Lord having, in general terms, rebuked the pride of the pharisees, now vindicates to Himself the authority and the power, which they had hitherto usurped, both by a parable, and by an illustration of that parable. And it will be seen that the immediate scope of our Lord’s discourse, in the following passage, is not to point out a general distinction between true and false teachers, though that may be naturally and

<sup>1</sup> *Matthew Henry* in loc.

easily drawn as an inference from what is here laid down ; but to exhibit, in a strong light, the points of contrast between Himself and the pharisees, who had wished to be regarded as the shepherds of Israel.

In the parable, two tests are proposed, by each of which it may be ascertained, who is the true *shepherd*, and who only a *thief and a robber*. One of the tests proposed is, the way in which they respectively enter upon the office ; and the other is, the manner in which they respectively perform its duties.

The former test is thus described in the two opening verses :

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*<sup>1</sup>

The pharisees *entered not by the door into the sheepfold*, because, though they sat in Moses' chair, they did not know that the law was to be regarded only as a schoolmaster to lead to Christ, and because, through ignorance of this truth, they despised that everlasting righteousness, which He was to bring in, as the foundation of his kingdom. But Jesus Christ himself *entered in by the door*, inasmuch as he came to exercise his

<sup>1</sup> Verses 1, 2.



mediatorial power, in exact conformity with the counsels of the everlasting covenant, and in a manner suited to vindicate and illustrate the majesty and the holiness of God. He *entered in by the door*, because he came to be obedient to the Father even unto death, and, as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, to obtain “power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him.”<sup>2</sup>

The latter test is thus described in the third and two following verses.

*To him the porter openeth*, says Jesus, and these words appear to receive illustration from the Baptist’s language, as recorded in the third chapter ;<sup>3</sup> *To him the porter openeth ; and the sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him ; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ; for they know not the voice of strangers.*<sup>4</sup>

Such is our Lord’s gracious promise to his believing people. And doubtless, brethren, it should be no small comfort to us to be thus assured, not only, that it is Jesus who *putteth forth* his people to their several trials ; but, also, that he is always at hand, when they are exposed to

<sup>2</sup> Chap. xvii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See chap. iii. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Verses 3—5.

the manifold crafts and assaults of thieves and robbers, and that he will continually *go before them*, to aid them in all those dangers, and to carry them through all those temptations, with which they are continually encompassed in this sinful world.

*This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me, acting by any authority other than which is derived from me, or teaching any other methods of salvation, are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them.*<sup>5</sup>

Well might our Lord repeat his accustomed asseveration, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*, when plainly declaring himself to be the only *door of the sheep*. For all scripture turns, as it were, upon this one point; viz. to show how the door of access to God, which sin had closed, has been reopened by Jesus Christ. It points everywhere to his obedience, and to the everlasting righteousness which he brought in, as the only foundation of all the faith, all the hope, and all the comfort of his believing people. Yes, brethren, it was to this “new and living way,” which was to be “consecrated for us, through the veil, that is

<sup>5</sup> Verses 6—8.

to say, the flesh"<sup>6</sup> of Christ, that the ordinances of the Mosaic law were fitted to lead the minds of all faithful worshippers. But the pharisees, and those who sat in Moses' seat, had, by their own unauthorised traditions, shut out, as far as in them lay, the view of this blessed truth. And, instead of directing their own hearts, and the hearts of others, to that everlasting righteousness, which was to be brought in by the Son of God, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and thus refused to enter in by the *door* of the sheepfold.

Now our Saviour declares, of all such, that his sheep will not *follow* them, for they *know not their voice*. And have we not seen this declaration strikingly illustrated in the case, described in the preceding chapter, of the man born blind, whose eyes the Lord had opened? For when the members of the great council of the nation threatened and reviled him, he, unmoved by their severity, calmly declared that "since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind;" adding, at the same time, that "if this man were not of God, he could do nothing." And when this same man, after having been "cast out by the pharisees, was found by Jesus, and invited by Him to "believe on the Son of God," the

<sup>6</sup> Heb. x. 20.

words of that gracious invitation sank so deeply into his soul, that, *knowing* the shepherd's voice, he said, "Lord I believe; and he worshipped him."<sup>7</sup>

Surely, brethren, it is here plainly declared, that they only, among the children of men, can speak home to the hearts and consciences of others, who have themselves been taught by the Spirit of Christ, and whose words, therefore, are blessed with strength from the Chief Shepherd, to pierce into the inmost recesses of the soul. All such will be enabled to speak home to the hearts and consciences of others, because they have themselves been led, by divine grace, to flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the Gospel, and because they can point, therefore, to that gate of righteousness, which has been opened for them, by Him, who hath "the key of David;" by Him, "who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."<sup>8</sup>

Yea, proceeds Jesus, *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*<sup>9</sup>

When first applying to himself the image of

<sup>7</sup> See chap. ix. 32, 33, and 35—38.

<sup>8</sup> Rev. iii. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Verses 9, 10.

the *door*, our Lord had represented himself as the *door of the sheep*, adding that the sheep did not hear those who came, as *thieves and robbers*, to teach other methods of salvation. It would seem, therefore, that he then referred chiefly to those believers, under the law, who, in faith and hope, had looked to the end of that dispensation, and who, having seen the promises afar off, had been enabled to rejoice in the promised Messiah, as the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. And, if we adopt this interpretation of our Lord's words, there will appear to be a peculiar emphasis in the manner in which he now repeats the above figurative expression, saying simply, *I am the door*. For he thus describes himself as *the door* not only of those sheep, who had already entered in, and were safe, but of all, in every age and every clime, who should enter by him into the fold: *I am the door: by me if ANY MAN enter he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

To show, more clearly, the full import of the expression of *going in and out, and finding pasture*, our Lord immediately repeats the same truth, in a different manner, saying, in the reverse, *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* That is; I am come, not only to

my people from death, and to give them the promise of everlasting blessedness, but to give them a pledge and a foretaste of it, even now, in all the unspeakable privileges of the Gospel. They shall not only look forward, therefore, in common with the patriarchs and prophets of old, to everlasting life after death ; but they shall enjoy, even now, all the graces of the Holy Spirit, to “ seal them unto the day of redemption.”<sup>1</sup> We may also regard the promise of *more abundant life*, as referring to the believer’s growth in grace, and to his progress in the christian life. ‘ And truly,’ says Calvin, ‘ the more every man goeth forward in faith, the nigher he cometh unto the perfection of life ; because THE SPIRIT increaseth in him, which is LIFE.’

Such, brethren, are the blessings, which our Lord here proclaims to us ; blessings, freely offered to all who enter in by *the door* of everlasting righteousness. Oh ! let us see, then, that, as we value the health of our souls, we are entering in by this door ; earnestly praying that the Holy Spirit may open our hearts and sanctify our affections, to receive and apply to ourselves these gracious words of Jesus : *I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

1. Observe, first, the promise of *salvation*,

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 30

which these words contain. *By me*, says Jesus, *if any man enter in, he shall be saved.* This, brethren, is the express declaration of Him, whose message we bear. And how, therefore, can we fulfil the end of our ministry towards his spouse and his body, unless we shall repeat to you, again and again, that there is ‘none other Name under heaven given to man, in whom, and through whom, we may receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ?’<sup>2</sup> *The thief cometh not*, says Jesus, *but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.* And the thief, and the robber, is he, that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way. Here, then, is a word of solemn warning to every minister of Christ, reminding him of the irreparable injury which he will inflict upon the souls of those committed to his charge, if he shall neglect to point out to them the true and only door, by which they may enter in and be saved. “Woe be to you,” says Jehovah, by the mouth of his servant Ezekiel, to the treacherous shepherds of Israel: “The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have

<sup>2</sup> *The order for the Visitation of the Sick.*

ye ruled them.”<sup>3</sup> And will not that woe be upon us, if, while we call ourselves the ministers of Christ, we shall neglect to place Him before you, as “the chiefest among ten thousand,” yea, as “altogether lovely?”<sup>4</sup> Will not that woe be upon us, if, while we profess to come to you in the name of the Lord Jesus, we shall dare to speak to you of the dignity of human nature; or if we shall bid you trust, in any degree whatever, to the sufficiency of your own strength; or if, for a single instant, we shall cease to warn you against all the dangers to which you are exposed from the suggestions of your own evil hearts, and from the temptations of the world around you? My christian brethren, may I ever be mindful of the vows which are upon me, as a minister of the Church of England, “not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”<sup>5</sup> And may you ever be persuaded that he must indeed be a *thief* and a *robber*, who would actually do what in him lies to starve and destroy your souls, by preaching any scheme of ‘lean morality,’<sup>6</sup> as the foundation on which you are to rest, instead of teaching you to build all your obedience “on your most holy faith,” and, with penitent, believing hearts, to “look for the

<sup>3</sup> See Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 4.<sup>4</sup> Sol. Song v. 10 and 16.<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.<sup>6</sup> *Dean Stanhope.*



mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." <sup>7</sup>

2. Oh! look, continually, for that "mercy," and you shall hear your Redeemer's voice, giving you the sweet assurance of present blessedness, as well as the gracious promise of future salvation. For he expressly declares that if you *enter in* by the *door*, you shall not only be *saved*, but shall *go in and out and find pasture*. In other words, *He is come, that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly*. Yes, beloved, he is come that, by believing in him, you may pass IMMEDIATELY from death to life, and that, amidst the sundry and manifold changes of the world, you may abound, more and more, in all the graces and consolations of the Holy Spirit!

Enter, then, by this *door*, and you shall experience all the blessednesss, which our Lord's words imply. Enter in by this *door*, and you shall hear the voice of the *good Shepherd*, inviting you to *go in and out*, and assuring you that you shall *find pasture*. Approach, continually, through this only *door*, to the throne of grace, that, as you *go in*, you may taste and see how gracious the Lord is: and then, as you *go out* amongst your fellow men, this *good Shepherd* will still be

<sup>7</sup> Jude 20, 21.

with you, to comfort and support you. He will be with you, as you join in all the ordinances of His Church, and He will bless them to you, as the green pastures, in which the waters of comfort are always flowing for the strength and refreshment of our souls. He will be with you, in all the employments of your worldly callings, enabling you to hear ‘the melodies of the everlasting chime,’ and to

‘ Carry music in your heart,  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying your daily task with busier feet,  
Because your secret souls a holy strain repeat.’<sup>8</sup>

He will be with you, in the season of sickness and sorrow, teaching and enabling you so to suffer here with Him, that you may reign with Him hereafter. He will be with you, in poverty, teaching and enabling you to “cast all your care upon him,” under the sweet persuasion that “He careth for you.”<sup>9</sup> He will be with you, also, in the season of health and strength, teaching you to employ, with thankfulness, all the means and opportunities you possess, for the advancement of his kingdom. And if you are fallen upon evil days, when the very foundations of the earth seem to be shaken, amidst the tumults of ungodly men, you shall still feel that you have

<sup>8</sup> *Keble’s Christian Year.*

<sup>9</sup> 1 Pet. v. 7.

entered into the gate of righteousness, and are safe. And, while you experience the blessedness of being "hidden in the secret of his presence from the pride of man," and of being "kept secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues,"<sup>1</sup> you shall say, with the psalmist; "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble: Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." For "the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."<sup>2</sup>

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## SECTION XXXVIII.

CHAP. x. ver. 11—21.

JESUS CHRIST, THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

We have considered our Lord's parable, in the first five verses of the chapter, together with the illustration of that part of it which represents Christ as "the door." And we are now to consider the remaining part of our Lord's illustration, in which he speaks of himself as *the good*

<sup>1</sup> Psa. xxxi. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Psa. xli. 1, 2, and 7.

*Shepherd.* This illustration was the more necessary, since, in describing himself as “the door,” he had evidently predicted things concerning himself, which seemed to go beyond that particular emblem. Wherefore, that it might clearly appear in what manner he conferred those various privileges, which he had just declared to be the consequence of entering in by him as the door, he now goes on to describe himself as the Shepherd of the sheep.

*I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*<sup>1</sup>

In calling himself *the*, or, as it might still more emphatically be rendered, *that good Shepherd*, our Lord may be understood, partly, as referring to those prophetic scriptures, well known to the pharisees, in which he is described as the one true Shepherd of Israel, and, partly, as contrasting himself with those false shepherds, against

<sup>1</sup> Verses 11—15.

whom he would warn his people to be perpetually on their guard. And when our Lord adds, *The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*, he declares to us the grand fundamental truth of the gospel; viz. that Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; that the punishment of death due to sinners was then transferred to him; and that by his death, therefore, all who believe in him are delivered from the sentence of eternal death.

Nor is our Lord content with once declaring these important truths; but, to impress them the more deeply on the hearts of his people, he repeats and enlarges upon the above declaration almost immediately afterwards, saying; *I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father :<sup>2</sup> and I lay down my life for the sheep.* We are here assured that the good shepherd *knows his sheep*. That is, according to the extensive signification of the phrase as used in scripture; He is not only fully acquainted with, but will effectually provide against all the difficulties, all the enemies, all the weaknesses, and all the wants, to which his people are exposed. As it is so beautifully expressed by one of those prophets, to whom our Lord is here referring ;

<sup>2</sup> This clause might be rendered, *Even as the Father knoweth me, and as I know the Father.*

“ He feeds his flock ; and causes them to lie down ; he seeks that which was lost, and brings again that which was driven away, and binds up that which was broken, and strengthens that which was sick.”<sup>3</sup> But, then, observe, brethren ; While one clause of the verse thus expresses the love of Christ toward his people, seeing that ‘ knowledge proceedeth from love, and carrieth with it a care ;’<sup>4</sup> he giveth us also to understand, in another clause, that he careth not for those who do not obey the Gospel. For if it be true, on the one hand, that Christ *knows his sheep*, it is, on the other hand, equally true, that *he is known of his*. Yes, beloved, his people know him by faith and experience ; and they are so acquainted with all his perfections and offices, as to follow him with faithful, loving, and obedient hearts, whithersoever he leadeth them.

And how wonderfully is our conception of this mutual knowledge and love of Christ and his people elevated and enlarged, when he vouchsafes to tell us that it resembles the mutual knowledge subsisting between the Father and the Son : *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father*. This knowledge which the Father has of the Son, as the Head of his chosen people, and the Shepherd of his sheep, includes all that has been ordained, in the counsels of

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. xxxiv. 15, 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Calvin.*

eternity, for the redemption of the sheep by the death of their shepherd, and for their sanctification and eternal salvation, in and through him. And this knowledge which the Son hath of the Father, comprises his entire acquiescence in the counsels of the Father, and his cheerful obedience unto death for the sheep of his fold. And as this mutual knowledge has existed from everlasting, so from everlasting has the Son been prepared, as his language implies,<sup>5</sup> *to lay down his life for the sheep*. Surely, brethren, as we listen to the gracious words which thus proceed out of his mouth, we must feel constrained to say, with St. Paul, that the love of Christ “passeth knowledge!”<sup>6</sup> For we gather, from these words, how clearly our Lord foresaw his approaching sufferings and death, and how content he was to do that will of the Father, for the performance of which he was come into the world, and which was always lodged within his heart. It had been foretold of this *good Shepherd*, that he should make his soul an offering for sin,”<sup>7</sup> yea, that he should “pour out his soul unto death.”<sup>8</sup> And our Lord, knowing that he had “a baptism to be baptized with,”<sup>9</sup> was earnestly longing for that hour when he should “see of the travail of

<sup>5</sup> *τιθημι*, in the present tense.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. iii. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. liii. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. verse 12.

<sup>9</sup> Luke xii. 50.

his soul, and be satisfied.”<sup>1</sup> O the depth of the riches of this love! A love, which so constrained the *good Shepherd* of the sheep, that, so far from being appalled at the greatness of the price which he was to pay for our redemption, he could actually reckon ignominy, suffering, and death itself, among the highest evidences of the wonderful relation which he bore to the Father and to us, as the one promised Mediator between God and man.

When our Lord says, of the hireling, *Whose own the sheep are not*, it may seem as if he made all men hirelings without exception, besides himself alone. And undoubtedly, brethren, since Jesus is the only shepherd, it is not lawful for any one of us to call the sheep which he feedeth *his own*. But then let us remember, for our comfort, that all, whose hearts are influenced by the Spirit of Christ, may justly account that *their own*, which is, in truth, their Head's. And they account it *their own*, not in order that they may usurp any power unto themselves, but that they may faithfully keep that which is committed to their charge. For he that is truly united unto Christ, will never account that strange unto him, which is so dear unto his Lord and his God.

Jesus, having thus solemnly and emphatically

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 11.



proclaimed himself to be the *good Shepherd*, now subjoins some observations, which, while they tend to illustrate and confirm what he had said, serve, at the same time, to meet two objections, which might be raised by the enemies of the truth.

The first objection, which they might bring forward, was the small number of the sheep. For what, it might be asked, could be expected of that shepherd, who could only reckon a small, and despised part, of the Jewish nation among his own sheep? Could he be rightly entitled the *good Shepherd*, or the Shepherd of Israel, whom the great and the noble among the people of Israel, treated with hatred and scorn? To remove these, and similar difficulties, our Lord follows up what he had just said with a prophecy respecting the calling of the Gentiles:

*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*<sup>2</sup>

Yes, brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ is, and has been, in every age, the only true Shepherd of the sheep. And the day shall come when his authority shall be fully acknowledged, and when all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, shall form *one fold*, under this *one Shepherd*.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 16.

And, in the mean time, as we contemplate that ONE CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH, whose foundations are upon the holy hills, and whose branches extend to the utmost corners of the earth, we feel assured that *the good Shepherd* is thus preparing the way for the fulfilment of his own most gracious promise. For the holy church of Christ, throughout all the world, worships and adores one and the same God ; it is governed by one and the same Head ; it is animated by one and the same Spirit ; it receives one and the same gospel ; it is purified by one and the same baptism ; it is nourished by the same heavenly food ; it walks by the same divine faith ; it is elevated by the same hope ; it tends toward the same country ; and it is now united to God, and will be perfected in him eternally, by the same everlasting love. And may we not truly say, brethren, that it is the prospect of this blessed and perfect union, which consoles the people of God, amidst all the divisions which it is their grief to witness, while pilgrims upon earth ?

The second objection, which might be brought forward, was the mention which had been made of the death of Christ. For where, it might be asked, was the power of the Shepherd, seeing that he could not save his own soul from death ? And what would be the hopes of the sheep, when exposed, by the death of their Shepherd, to the

danger of being scattered or devoured by wolves? Our Lord proceeds, therefore, to describe the nature of his death, and to show how everything was to be accomplished according to the will of the Father.

*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*<sup>3</sup>

When we hear our Lord saying, *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again*, we must remember that there is, indeed, another, and a higher cause of the Father's love to the Son; inasmuch as the voice was not uttered from heaven in vain, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>4</sup> But since the Son came to fulfil all the good pleasure of his Father; and since, by his perfect obedience even unto death, the will of the Father was fully accomplished; the glory of the divine perfections was revealed; and the love of the Son toward the Father, leading him thus to promote his honour, was wonderfully demonstrated; well might our Lord speak of the Father's love to the Son, as being called forth in a special manner, by that mysterious sacrifice, in

<sup>3</sup> Verses 17, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. iii. 17.

which it was so plainly declared that our salvation was dearer to the Son than his own life. As the words are admirably paraphrased by Bishop Hall: 'However, the love of my Father to me, as his eternal Son, is infinite every way, and not capable of the limits of time or measure; yet, as man, and as Mediator between him and man, he loveth me for that dear propension of love, which he sees in me to mankind; that I am, for the redemption thereof, so cheerfully ready to lay down this life of mine.'

But, while our Lord thus speaks of his death, he shows, at the same time, by the express mention of his resurrection, that death should not have dominion over him: *I lay down my life, that I might take it again.* Through death, he was to destroy death; and, by rising to life again, he was to restore to us everlasting life. And it is certain, my brethren, that we should always so think upon the death of Christ, as, at the same time, to remember the glory of his resurrection; inasmuch as, having entered into combat with death, he hath overcome the same mightily, and hath triumphed victoriously, for the benefit of his redeemed people. Yea, by *laying down his life, that he might take it again*, he has 'overcome the sharpness of death,' and has 'opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers!'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Te Deum Laudamus.*

And, in all this, it was evident that he acted, as that Messiah, who was to come to do the will of God. For *this commandment*, says Jesus, *have I received of my Father*. That is ; ‘ All the whole carriage of this great business, both in the voluntary resigning and the reassuming of my life, is that, which has been expressly determined by the eternal, and most wise, and holy decree of my Father.’ <sup>6</sup>

In the three remaining verses, the evangelist thus describes the effect of this fifth conference :

*There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad ; why hear ye him ? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?* <sup>7</sup>

Thus was our Lord, for the third time,<sup>8</sup> treated as a demoniac ! And what was he doing to merit all this ? He was instructing the ignorant, and declaring that he was about to lay down his life for his lost and wandering sheep. Amazing love of God, and awful ingratitude and obduracy of man ! But still we may rest assured, that the doctrine of Jesus Christ shall always be able to defend itself against the calumnies and reproaches

<sup>6</sup> *Bishop Hall.*

<sup>7</sup> Verses 19—21.

<sup>8</sup> See chaps. vii. 20, and viii. 48, 52.

of its adversaries. And this was evidently the persuasion of those believing Jews, who said, in answer to the cavils of the others, *These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?* The men who so spake, plainly required that judgment should be given according to the real merits of the case. For they felt, on the one hand, that a *devil could not open the eyes of the blind.* And they felt, on the other hand, that these were not *the words of him that had a devil.* No; they felt that his words were truth. And they felt convinced, not only that the truth would sufficiently defend itself; but that it would ride on prosperously, with a glorious majesty and strength, which not all the malice of men or devils should be able to gainsay or resist!

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY G. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET.

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